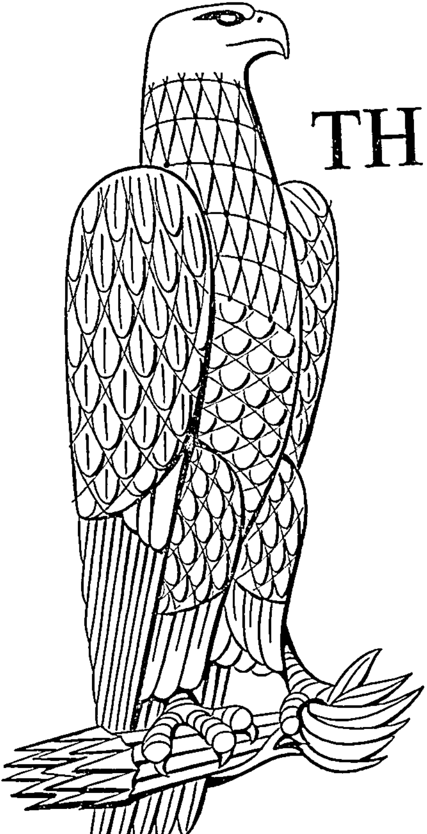
THE JEFFERSONIAN HERITAGE



THE

JEFFERSONIAN HERITAGE

Edited, and with an Introduction by

DUMAS MALONE

Written by

MORTON WISHENGRAD

MILTON GEIGER

JOSEPH MINDEL

GEORGE PROBST

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THE JEFFERSONIAN HERITAGE was originally a series of radio programs, based upon the plans and prepared with the counsel of DUMAS MALONE, Professor of History, Columbia University.

The scripts were written by
MORTON WISHENGRAD, MILTON GEIGER, JOSEPH MINDEL, and GEORGE PROBST.
The music was composed and directed by WLADIMIR SELINSKY.
The part of Jefferson was played by CLAUDE RAINS.
The programs were produced and directed by FRANK PAPP.

The series was presented by the ADULT EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATIONAL BROADCASTERS. The Committee consisted of:
GEORGE E. PROBST, *Chairman;* Radio Office, University of Chicago
RICHARD B. HULL; Director, Stations WOI and WOI-TV, Iowa State College
H. B. MCCARTY; Director, Station WHA and Wisconsin State FM Network
SEYMOUR N. SIEGEL; Director, Station WNYC, New York City
PARKER WHEATLEY; Director, Lowell Cooperating Broadcasting Council, Boston

WILLIAM HARLEY, Radio Station WHA, Madison, Wisconsin,
was the program coordinator.

RALPH LOWELL, Trustee of the Lowell Institute, Boston, administered the grant.

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THIS BOOK consists of a series of radio programs, first presented on the air in the autumn of 1952, which have been edited for purposes of publication. They have been recorded on tape and may be heard again and again in schools and elsewhere. It has also seemed desirable to gain for them the sort of permanence that goes with print. And we want to give people a chance to read as well as hear them, since the eye can catch some things which the most attentive ear may miss. How enduring their appeal may be, I do not presume to predict, but it is a matter of interest now that these little plays—for most of them are that—are the fruitage of an unusual experiment in the presentation of historic ideas in dramatic form. A priceless part of the heritage from the past, these ideas have direct bearing on the problems of the present age, and I hope we have made them come alive by thus embodying them.

To be more specific, this experiment began and was conducted as part of the Adult Education Project of the National Association of Educational Broadcasters, who did me the honor of asking me to be their consultant. The thought of presenting The Jeffersonian Heritage was theirs, and a number of people have shared in the making of these programs. Our original purpose was ideological rather than biographical. One man out of the past, Thomas Jefferson, was seized upon as the best personification and symbol of certain ideas which are characteristically [illegible] whole free world in the unending struggle against totalitarianism. We did not intend to emphasize a single historic leader for his own sake, whatever his deserts, nor to make invidious distinctions of any sort, even by implication. If the programs assumed a more biographical character than we originally intended, this was because of the necessities of effective dramatization.

The editor and publisher are grateful to everyone who helped with the illustrations. Special mention should be made of Mr. Curtis Thacker, of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation; Mr. Frank Weitenkampf, curator of prints, retired, of the New York Public Library; Miss Margaret Hackett and Mr. David McKibbin, of the Boston Athenaeum; Mr. Laurence C. Staples, of Washington, D.C.; and the Rev. Harry B. Scholefield, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

topics kept creeping in to the enrichment of the scripts, and some of the most important ideas kept reappearing throughout the series. The same can be said of certain great quotations. On the other hand, some of the original topics had to be given up, for various practical reasons. It would take a much bigger book than this one to give our readers the whole mind of Thomas Jefferson, even if it were within our power to disclose it.

It would be a reflection on the intelligence of our readers to say just what ideas we have tried to set forth here. I will admit, however, that we were always thinking of the present, as well as the past, and I have tried in the introductory chapter to sum up the meaning of the Jeffersonian heritage today. Originally, this was an informal address concluding the series. I have elaborated it somewhat for its present introductory purpose and have mentioned some things we were unable to touch on elsewhere. As given here, the other programs do not quite follow the original order of presentation, which was somewhat fortuitous, but not even here is the order chronological in any strict sense. Each one of them should be regarded as an entity, and Thomas Jefferson is to be thought of as timeless—still living, as is so often said.

The living actors in the individual programs are not listed, though the characters are. The part of Jefferson was played by Claude Rains throughout the series, and he brought to the role not only the dramatic ability for which he is renowned but also a rare degree of understanding.

In the printed version it is impossible to make more than the barest mention of the music which contributed so much to these productions. From the beginning to the end it was composed and conducted by Wladimir Selinsky.

The services of the producer and director, Frank Papp, are most inadequately summed up by repeating those titles. He deserves no small share of credit for the scripts themselves, for at all times he was a wise counselor and helpful critic.

These names are listed on another page, and along with them are the names of the committee members who administered this project for the National Association

Though personalized, the ideas and truths that are presented here are still American and universal.

The claim that history and the drama have joined hands in these programs would sound presumptuous and pretentious—whereas, in fact, all of us who have shared in them feel very humble. This is merely an expression of an ideal, and some explanation of our procedure is called for. In seeking to make these great ideas live again, we have made use of imaginative forms while trying to remain true to history in spirit. The distinction between the spirit and the letter is important, for we do not pretend to have attained full authenticity in factual detail. To the best of my knowledge, Jefferson himself is always in character, and many of the words uttered by him and others amount to direct quotations. I hope that no injustice has been done any historic figure, and that we have been guilty of no anachronism when dealing with actual historical events. But particular incidents have often been imagined, and in many instances Jefferson and others have been freed from the limitations of time and space. To a scholar who generally sticks to his facts and dates, this sort of procedure is rather terrifying, and I doubt if I should have been willing to have much part in it but for the influence of our gifted writers. They helped me in my efforts to avoid dull pedantry, and I hope they have forgiven me for trying to control their active imaginations. The results will have to speak for themselves. If the programs ring true and make their points, and if our readers find them interesting, I shall be content.

It fell to me to devise the over-all plan for the series, and to provide the writers with historical materials for the individual scripts, or to direct them to these materials. Actually, these industrious men did much reading on their own account and suggested some of the subjects. In the main, however, I provided the topics and supplied the arguments. Generally they found the "gimmicks," though we batted things back and forth and naturally I suggested many historical incidents. They did the creative work of writing and, at last, I served as critic. My early thought was to center each program in a single great topic, but, as the little dramas grew, kindred

I

WHAT THE JEFFERSONIAN HERITAGE MEANS TODAY

by DUMAS MALONE

of Educational Broadcasters. To the chairman of this Committee, George Probst—who also appears on the title page as an author—I owe a special word of thanks, as I do to William G. Harley, who served as the coordinator of this and other projects. Finally, I want to express my personal appreciation of the generosity and courage of the Fund for Adult Education, and the Ford Foundation, in making this experiment possible. I hope that its results will be an encouragement to them.

DUMAS MALONE

IN OUR DAY or any other, the Jeffersonian heritage belongs to everybody who will receive it. It is not the exclusive possession of any group or party. If Mr. Jefferson himself were addressing his countrymen right now, after surveying the troubled world, I think he would paraphrase his first inaugural and say: "We are all Democrats; we are all Republicans; we are all Americans." I think he would add that the American faith which he proclaimed is not ours alone, that it belongs to all free men everywhere. But, both at home and abroad, he would want people to understand it.

Thomas Jefferson still survives. That is what John Adams said on his own deathbed, and there is sure proof of it in the fact that his name is invoked so frequently in our time. I think it is invoked more often than that of any other historic American leader—more even than that of Lincoln. Sometimes Jefferson is quoted very carelessly—even unscrupulously. Words of his are sometimes wrenched from their context and given a distorted meaning by men who are not in his spirit. His writings are vast and it is easy to prove almost anything by taking sentences from this place or that—from private letters, for example—and weaving them ingeniously together. He would not like it if he knew that men were taking such liberties with his language.

More than that, he would regard it as rather silly in anybody to quote him authoritatively in connection with specific modern problems of which he had no knowledge. We must not ask too much of statesmen long dead, too much of the past, too much of history. Jefferson himself summed the matter up in a very won-

that in the teeth of Communists, Fascists, or any other sort of totalitarians.

Jefferson is the best historic symbol that we can oppose to modern despotism, but some things that are distinctive in Americanism today were not exemplified most notably by him. What do you suppose the people in other countries regard as the most distinctive thing about the United States right now? What is the first thing they would think of? My guess is that they would think first of our national power, and it is a great comfort to all of us to think of it.

Jefferson had a great deal to do with enlarging the territories of the United States, and he was immensely interested in all sorts of mechanical processes. But his great rival, Alexander Hamilton, can be better described as the architect of national power than he can. If Jefferson had had his way we probably should not have become industrialized so fast. We might have been a happier people if our material development had been slower; he thought so, anyway. But we would not have been so strong, so soon.

Of course, there never has been a time when people have not thought of this as potentially a mighty nation. But, until our own century, we were regarded as a sort of sluggard among the nations when it came to exercising our strength and throwing our weight around. Our distinctiveness lay in the great opportunities which were open to individuals here and to certain ideas which we signified.

In speaking of our country, Jefferson used the expression "the world's best hope." Lincoln spoke of "the last best hope on earth." What were these two great leaders thinking of? If they were thinking of our material power, they certainly did not stop there. They were thinking of certain ideas that we have exemplified better than anybody else.

These ideas belong to no single man, of course, but Lincoln identified them with the author of the Declaration of Independence, saying: "The principles of Jefferson are the definitions and axioms of free society." Jefferson himself thought they were universal and self-evident truths which he had had the honor of proclaiming, and by them he hoped that his countrymen would be forever guided.

derful quotation which is emphasized in Chapter Two of this book and richly deserves reiteration. Here it is: "The earth belongs always to the living generation." We cannot let the dead hand of the past guide the present. Our problems will always be illuminated by the lamp of experience, and every generation must build on the one that went before, but the men of the twentieth century have to draw their own blueprints for tomorrow.

Why, then, are so many people interested in Jefferson today? The main reason is that his fundamental ideas are still full of meaning and inspiration. Another reason lies in his extraordinary versatility as a person. He did everything, was interested in everything, and for that reason he has never died. There is something in this extraordinary man that appeals to almost everybody. More than that, there is symbolism in his diversity.

We have all heard or seen the word "monolithic" applied to the society and the thinking of the totalitarian countries. Monolithic system—monolithic society—monolithic mind. In the totalitarian states there is a climate of sameness; they are *trying to make society in a definite pattern and have everybody think the same way.* Well, what do we have to oppose to that? Do we have another kind of monolith, different from that of the Communists but uniformity nonetheless? Some people seem to think that would be desirable, but, as a matter of fact, that is not the sort of society we have and not the sort we ought to want. We have an extraordinarily heterogeneous population. A homogeneous population might make things simpler, but a diverse population makes them richer. We have an incredible variety of activity —an extraordinary proliferation in every conceivable direction. So, over against this monolithic system of totalitarianism, this deadly uniformity of life and thought, we have diversity to offer.

Our motto is *"E Pluribus Unum"*—one out of many. We seek unity in fundamental things, but in others we tolerate, even welcome, difference. Nothing is more characteristically Jeffersonian or more characteristically American than this concept of the richness, the glory, and the strength of diversity. We are glad to fling

particular group—to people like themselves. There has always been some objection to extending these blessings to everybody. Old settlers have objected to the extension of full privileges to newcomers, rich people have thought that they were entitled to special favors, and people have often wanted to draw lines on religious or racial grounds.

It is not at all surprising that any group that has enjoyed privileges should be somewhat reluctant to share them with other groups. But it is perfectly obvious that the glory of individualism lies in its universality. If you narrow it down to any particular group or person it loses all its glory. Then it becomes just a form of selfishness; and selfishness and individualism are by no means synonymous terms. Individualism does not mean that any one of us has the privilege of acting like a spoiled child. I am afraid there are a good many spoiled children in our prosperous society.

If you define individualism as a sort of glorified selfishness, it is an insufficient philosophy for any people. We quote the old saying, "It is sweet and honorable to die for one's country"—but why die for your country if it really exists primarily for you? Why give your life for it on some distant battlefield? Yet Americans have been giving their lives for their country throughout history, and we take deep pride in this fact. And, as for Mr. Jefferson, this great apostle of individualism, he would never have devoted himself to the service of his country through so many long years if he had been selfish. He would have stayed at Monticello, above the storms of controversy.

We cannot allow this precious doctrine of individualism to be perverted into sheer selfishness. The government *is made for us*; but our government would fail tomorrow if our people assumed that the country owed them everything and they owed the country nothing. The common sense of our people would be revolted by any such misinterpretation of *our historic* doctrine. There are plenty of difficulties about applying it, but I think there can be no possible doubt that we really *believe* in individualism.

I am not so sure about freedom. Of course, everybody says he is *for it*. All

Now, there are a number of these ideas and we cannot talk about very many of them. So I thought I would pick out one which was central in the mind of Jefferson. He did not invent it and he was not the only one who stressed it, but he personified and symbolized it to an extraordinary degree. It is the idea of the free individual. This is the essence of historic Americanism and it is a complete antithesis of the totalitarian concept at the present time. It is a tremendous idea and our most important single weapon—more important even than the atomic bomb.

We might speak first of "the individual" and then of the word "free."

Individual—individualism—just what do we mean by these words? What Jefferson meant was that, in any and every field of life, human considerations must come first. To express the idea politically, man was not made for the state, but the state was made for man. That is the exact opposite of the Nazi point of view, of the Communist point of view. The individual is no mere cog in a governmental machine. He is the purpose of it all. It is for him. He is the reason why we have governments. As the Declaration of Independence says, governments are set up "to secure these rights." What rights? The rights of individual human beings. Not only is this true of government but of all other institutions—business, industry, property, schools, even churches. Man was not made for these; they were made for him. All institutions must be tested constantly, to see what use they are to individuals.

This doctrine is not one that very many Americans are going to object to. If you ask them, they will tell you they are for it. They could not say anything else if they are familiar with our history and loyal to our greatest tradition.

But we can easily pervert or abuse the doctrine of individualism, and one of the main ways of doing this is by narrowing and limiting it. Our governments and all our institutions exist for the benefit of individual human beings, but the question is: what individual human beings? The first answer of anybody is, "for me" —"for me and my wife, and my son John and his wife." Very few of us are quite so narrow that we stop there, but many people at all times have acted as if they thought that the benefits of government and society really should belong chiefly to their

particular group--to people like themselves. There has always been some objection to extending these blessings to everybody. Old settlers have objected to the extension of full privileges to newcomers, rich people have thought that they were entitled to special favors, and people have often wanted to draw lines on religious or racial grounds.

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hold up your hands who are in favor of freedom. All hands go up. It is just like democracy; everybody is for it. Then everybody defines it to suit himself. Some people want freedom for themselves but are quite unwilling to allow it to other people. There are a number of varieties of freedom. Some people are for some, and against others.

I shall pick out a few of these varieties of freedom and discuss them as I think Jefferson himself would, beginning with the one which he regarded as most important. Then you can ask yourself just what all this means today.

You may be a little surprised, but I believe that Jefferson put religious freedom first. Some people did not regard him as a very religious man. There is no need to go into that question here, but at least I can say that it is not a good idea to form your opinion of any man from what his political enemies have said about him. Also, some people merely mean their own brand of religion when they use the word. To them the other varieties are in a lower class. When Jefferson talked about religion he did not mean just his own church or any other; he meant the spiritual life of any and every human being.

To him that was the most sacred thing in the world. He believed that nobody has any more right to pry into another man's religion than into his most intimate personal life—such as his relations with his wife. The sanctuary of anybody's soul, of anybody's conscience, should not be invaded. To Jefferson, enforced religion of any sort was a contradiction in terms; it was utterly unthinkable.

To him the highest and most sacred of all freedoms was freedom of the spirit, and this could not be separated from freedom of the mind. The most important thing about a person is his mind. If that is not free, he is not free at all, and to call him free is mockery. So you come to the most characteristic of all Jeffersonian quotations. It is now emblazoned in big letters in his memorial in Washington, as it ought to be. "I have sworn on the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man."

As I have already said, he represents as complete an antithesis to totalitarian-

ism as history offers. He would detest the Communists in Russia on many grounds, but I think he would be most appalled by their attempt to enslave the minds of their people. He always had great faith in the resistance of human beings to coercion, but he would be quick to realize what can be done to the minds of men when tyranny masks its designs with a fanatical patriotism and specious philosophy. Men can be enslaved step by step without perceiving that the chains are being riveted on them. This can happen in any country, especially in times of great danger, when unscrupulous men gain control of important means of propaganda, impose their pattern of thinking on an unsuspecting people, and gradually gain possession of the government.

Along with other famous apostles of light and liberty, Jefferson believed that the mind is the greatest hope of humankind. You cannot put it in chains without chaining human progress and crushing human aspiration. The age in which he lived—the early part of it anyway—has sometimes been described as *the bright springtime of the modern mind*. I do not know how future generations will describe the age we are living in. So far as science is concerned, we may call it a rich and fruitful autumn, but in some other departments of life it sometimes looks as though winter is coming on. Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin were in the spirit of the spring; and nothing is more refreshing than to go back and see what these men hoped would flow from the founts of liberated intelligence. They believed that if men could rid themselves of superstition and prejudice and make their minds really free, they could solve not only the problems of nature, but also the problems of human society. They believed there could be political and social science as well as natural science, and that men could and would heed its teaching.

If Jefferson and Franklin could come back and view the present [illegible] would they [illegible] nature th[illegible] [illegible]igence have far surpassed their most sanguine expectations. In some other fields, however, they might well be appalled by the slightness of our progress. The physical world has been transformed; but it looks

like the same old place when you get the politicians together. They are playing the same old tricks and, all too often, are getting away with them. In many ways there has been great social progress, but the statesmen and soldiers have been far more successful in getting us into wars than out of them. Our country was in grave danger during most of Jefferson's lifetime and it is in grave danger now, though it is immensely stronger.

Why this vast difference between scientific and political progress? How would these men from the springtime of the modern mind explain it?

Perhaps one answer would be that the greatest triumphs have been in the field where the mind has been freest. We really took the shackles off our scientists in their laboratories, but nobody who moves in the political and social spheres has quite the same degree of freedom. Even though there may be no restrictive laws, one is conscious of what people are thinking. Perhaps we may say that only in the realm of natural science has the freedom of the mind been fully tested.

Another thing—and I wonder if Mr. Jefferson would admit this—perhaps he did not allow enough for the weakness of human nature. There is a good deal in the old-fashioned theological idea that man was born in sin—that, after all, he has to be redeemed. We are trying to regenerate the little sinners and to civilize the little savages in our homes and schools and churches all the time. It is a slow process that has to be repeated in every generation; and we need more emphasis on good old-fashioned ethical and religious ideas to hitch up with it. But we should make a tragic mistake if we surrendered our ancient democratic faith in the common sense, good will, and fundamental good judgment of the ordinary citizens. They can be better trusted than any of the despots and oligarchies of our day; and if we cannot rely on them, whom can we rely on?

One of the things that has made Jefferson a beacon in our history is the faith he always had in the common people. It was a faith based on study, observation, and experience; and I am sure he would not surrender it. The supremely important thing still is to see that the people get the real facts, and that they are left free to

judge them.

Freedom of speech, of course, goes along with freedom of the mind. There is not much point in being free to arrive at a discovery if you are not able to give it out; not much use in arriving at opinions that seem to you to be correct unless you can express them. But freedom of speech is not an absolute like freedom of the mind; there are certain limitations on it that are imposed by common sense. You do not tell everything you know, because frequently people are not ready to receive it. We have to follow that policy in education. We do not tell the same thing to all ages. There is a pedagogical consideration. Also, there is a social question—a question of manners. If anybody went around and said exactly what he thought about other people he would be practically intolerable. We cannot live that way.

Then there is the larger question of safety, of security. As Mr. Justice Holmes said in one of his opinions, no man has a right to get up in a crowded theater and yell "Fire!" There have always been practical limitations on freedom of speech; and in times of war and acute danger there have to be more, for safety's sake. Just how far such restrictions ought to go is a question which has perplexed wise men for many generations, and I certainly cannot answer it here. Freedom of speech can be terribly abused anywhere at any time. In some part of our own huge country somebody abuses it every day. Lies are uttered as well as truths, and characters are defamed—especially in the heat of political campaigns.

Freedom of speech is a very dangerous thing; there's no denying it. But there is something even more dangerous; that is coercion. We do not want to imitate the Nazis in Germany and the Communists in Russia; they throttled the press and destroyed freedom of speech to consolidate their tyranny. Instead, we should follow the precept and example of Thomas Jefferson, who refused to [illegible] time of [illegible]

[illegible] on the side of freedom than on the [illegible] ercion. The [illegible]

to leave [illegible]

This brings us to freedom of enterprise, which is much talked about in our time. Jefferson said more about freedom of the mind and freedom of speech—regarding these as basic. All others depend at last on them, for if men cannot think and talk freely they will eventually lose all their liberties. But he strongly believed in freedom of enterprise. He believed that everybody should have a real chance to work in his own way. That is the reason he said so much about independent, self-sufficient farmers, whom he regarded as the freest and happiest men on earth.

He believed in private property—of course. There has been some attempt—a very ludicrous attempt—to make a Communist out of him. He was exactly the opposite of that. Instead of thinking that nobody should own property, that everything should belong to the government, he thought that everybody should have property. He wanted to make it as easy as possible for everybody to get land. But he was more interested in the small landowner than the large one. In his time there were companies seeking to gobble up millions of acres of public land in the West and to use them for speculative purposes. He was strongly opposed to these companies, and to all forms of speculation.

In his economic ideas he was conservative and old-fashioned. He lived in an age when the country was still predominantly agricultural and he wanted to keep it so. If he was not disposed to regulate business, he was no more disposed to help it. Actually, he was a real advocate of *laissez-faire,* and his philosophy of government sounds very negative to any modern ear. In his first inaugural he spoke of a wise and frugal government, which should restrain men from injuring one another, but should leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement; and he described this as the sum of good government. He himself was not quite that negative in practice, and I do not believe that either the businessmen, the laborers, or the farmers of our time would be satisfied with such a philosophy. They all want more help from the government than that, even though they may be strongly opposed to their own regulation.

Jefferson was addressing himself to the society of 150 years ago. If he were to

come back now he would find a big government, big corporations, big farms, big labor unions. Would he like them? There is no reason to believe he would—no more than *that* this inveterate countryman would like our enormous cities. What he would say about the relations between the government and these various economic groups in our time is anybody's guess; but, as I have said already, we cannot expect to find any precise answer to the specific problems of our time in his writings. The answer is not there. But the criterion is there, and he would ask: What is the value of these things to human beings?

Another thing you cannot find there, and perhaps this will surprise you. He said little or nothing about the problem of economic security. There is very little about freedom from want in the writings of Jefferson. The time he came nearest to this problem and talked about it most was when he was in France, before the French Revolution, and was impressed by the plight of the poor people in that misgoverned Kingdom. But in his own country he did not say much about this sort of thing and did not need to. What he was talking about was equality of opportunity. Nobody then was thinking about giving people security in their jobs, preventing unemployment, providing old-age pensions. There was plenty of land, and the important thing was to open it up so people could get it. Many of our present economic problems simply did not exist.

But if he were here now he could not fail to see one thing which is too obvious for any intelligent mind to miss. It is this: the economic situation of any individual or group or society may be so bad that these higher freedoms we have been talking about will have no meaning. There is *little* use talking about freedom of speech to a man who cannot get a job—as was *true of* many a man during [illegible]. There is no [illegible] stoma[illegible] has an empty stomach he becomes mostly stomach.

If we define freedom of enterprise as opportunity to work and to raise oneself beyond the mere level of subsistence, it may thus be regarded as the most basic of

all the freedoms, even though Jefferson did not himself place it first in importance. I do not know how many people are below the economic safety line in our own country, but there are far too many of them in the world, and we ought to know by now that they provide fertile ground for demagogues to cultivate. And we ought to know by now that conditions in any country can be so bad that people will barter their freedom for what they hope will be security. That is what they did in Hitler's Germany. That is what they have done in countries that have been beguiled by the false promises of the Communists. To the Jeffersonian philosophy, therefore, we must add an emphasis on basic economic security which was not required by his times but is required by ours.

What are the main dangers that this Jeffersonian heritage of freedom and individualism faces in our country in our time? There is no single or complete answer to such a sweeping question, but in speaking of it here I shall try to do so in the Jeffersonian spirit.

In all countries in all ages, the growth of organized power in any form has carried with it fresh dangers to personal liberty; and free men should always fear those leaders in any field of endeavor who love power for its own sake, just as they should always be on guard against men who are consumed with greed. In one form or another we have always had racketeers among us, and no doubt we have had our quota of wicked men—some of them in high places. But, in the United States, the extensions of governmental authority and the consequent limitation of individual freedom have not resulted from the machinations of unscrupulous adventurers like Hitler and Mussolini who have exploited the necessities of their own people. Many of them have come from the growth and increasing complexity of our society. But I believe that the greatest extensions of public power and limitations of personal liberty have come as the result of war—the Civil War, the first World War, the depression that resulted from it, the second World War, and the cold war that has come out of that.

The necessities and the psychology of war play havoc with individual freedom

in all fields. No one can possibly doubt it who reads the record. It is for this reason that some high-minded people have been pacifists. Jefferson was not a pacifist. He could never have written the Declaration of Independence if he had been. I am sure, however, that he would be appalled by the thought of what another total war might do to all our historic rights as individuals. Much has been said about what the atom bomb would do to the physical civilization of the world. That is terrible to contemplate. We must also consider what it might and almost surely would do to our liberties.

What would a person like Jefferson think about this situation? I do not believe he would be a pacifist, but I do not think he would talk about the inevitability of war and thus make it seem all the more inevitable. There is nothing inevitable where human beings are concerned. He was no economic determinist or any sort of fatalist, but always believed that man is the master of his own destiny. I think he would still be a man of faith and that he would put the emphasis in exactly the same place that he did in his own time—that is, on the human mind. Surely the generation that had brains enough to develop these terrible instruments of destruction ought to have intelligence enough to halt the march of despotism in the world, without wrecking civilization.

I think this man out of the age of reason would say to all free men: "Come, let us reason together. Let us forget these bickerings of politics and partisanship and narrow nationalism when the liberties of all of us are at stake." I am sure that he would renew his ancient faith and would swear again on the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man.

If we cannot depend on human intelligence to work out our problems, in the name of Heaven what can we depend on? God will not save us. God helps those who help themselves by using as fully and freely as possible the minds He gave them.

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THEME MUSIC USED IN THE ORIGINAL RADIO PRODUCTION OF

The Jeffersonian Heritage

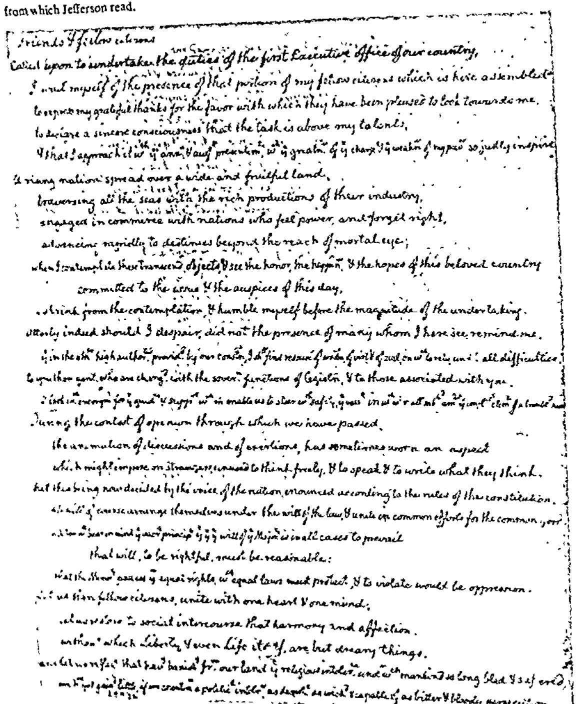
by WLADIMIR SELINSKY

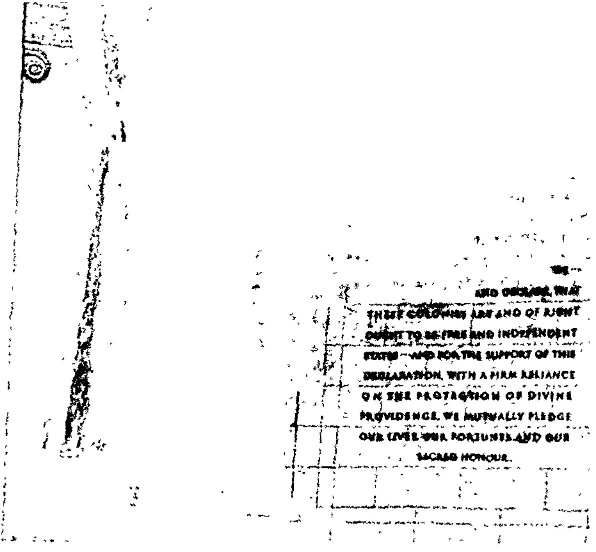




THOMAS JEFFERSON: Life mask by John I. H. Browere.
Bronze cast from a plaster life mask made by Browere in 1825,
when Jefferson was 82 years old.

JEFFERSON'S FIRST INAUGURAL ADDRESS:
First page of the manuscript, thought to be the copy from which Jefferson read.


Friends & fellow citizens
Called upon to undertake the duties of the first Executive office of our country,
I avail myself of the presence of that portion of my fellow citizens which is here assembled
to express my grateful thanks for the favor with which they have been pleased to look towards me.
to declare a sincere consciousness that the task is above my talents,
& that I approach it with those anxious & awful presentiments which the greatness of the charge & the weakness of my powers so justly inspire.
A rising nation, spread over a wide and fruitful land,
traversing all the seas with the rich productions of their industry,
engaged in commerce with nations who feel power, and forget right,
advancing rapidly to destinies beyond the reach of mortal eye;
when I contemplate these transcendent objects, & see the honor, the happiness, & the hopes of this beloved country
committed to the issue & the auspices of this day,
I shrink from the contemplation, & humble myself before the magnitude of the undertaking.
utterly indeed should I despair, did not the presence of many whom I here see, remind me,
that in the other high authorities provided by our constitution, I shall find resources of wisdom, of virtue & of zeal, on which to rely under all difficulties.
to you then gentlemen, who are charged with the sovereign functions of legislation, & to those associated with you,
I look with encouragement for that guidance & support which may enable us to steer with safety the vessel in which we are all embarked amidst the conflicting elements of a troubled world.
During the contest of opinion through which we have passed,
the animation of discussions and of exertions, has sometimes worn an aspect
which might impose on strangers unused to think freely, & to speak & to write what they think.
but this being now decided by the voice of the nation, enounced according to the rules of the constitution,
all will of course arrange themselves under the will of the law, & unite in common efforts for the common good.
all too will bear in mind this sacred principle, that tho' the will of the majority is in all cases to prevail
that will, to be rightful, must be reasonable:
that the minority possess their equal rights, which equal laws must protect, & to violate would be oppression.
let us then fellow citizens, unite with one heart & one mind,
let us restore to social intercourse that harmony and affection
without which liberty & even life itself, are but dreary things.
and let us reflect that having banished from our land that religious intolerance under which mankind so long bled & suffered,
we have yet gained little, if we countenance a political intolerance, as despotic, as wicked & capable of as bitter & bloody persecution.

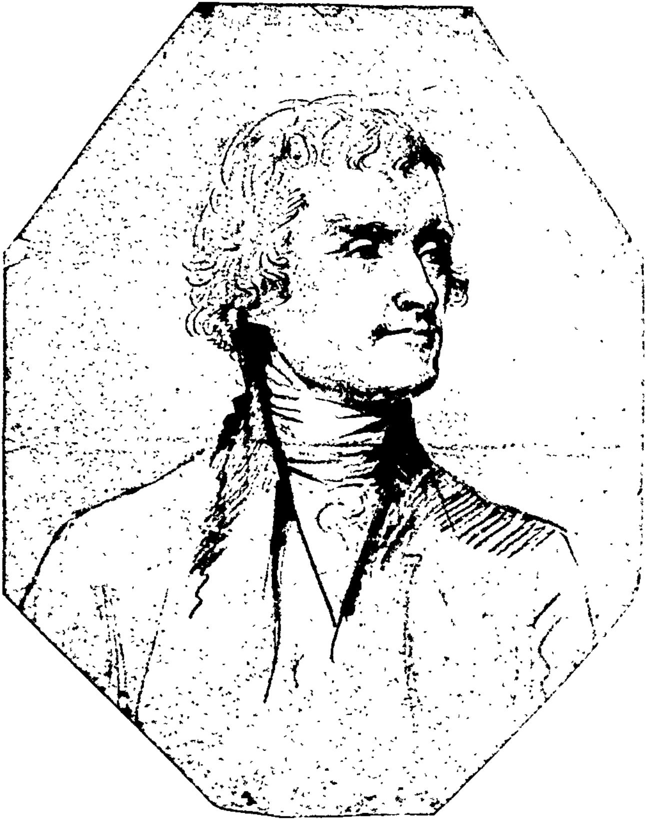


THOMAS JEFFERSON: Statue in the Jefferson Memorial, Washington, D.C.

Earliest known text of the bill, printed in Williamsburg in 1779.

A BILL *for establishing* RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, *printed for the consideration of the* PEOPLE.

WELL aware that the opinions and belief of men depend not on their own will, but follow involunta-
... Almighty God hath created the mind free, and



THOMAS JEFFERSON:

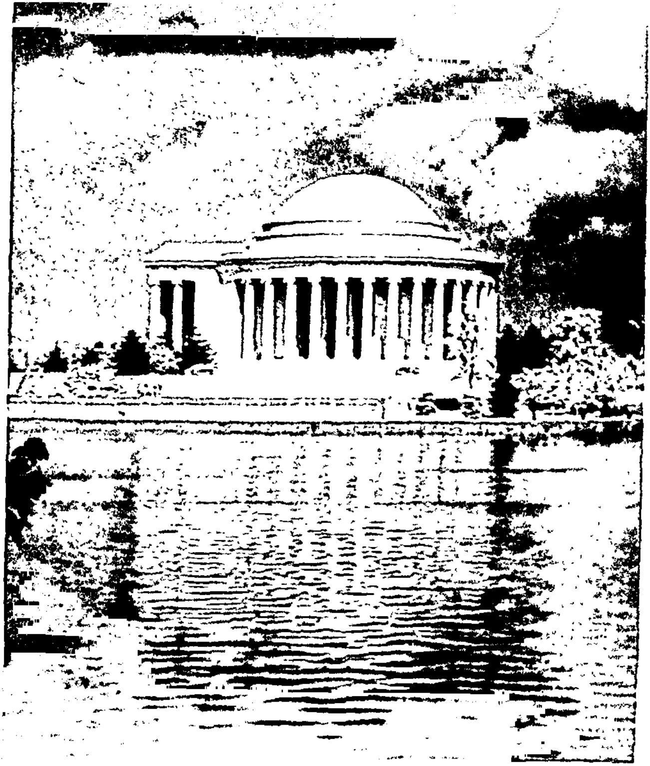
Pencil drawing by Benjamin Henry Latrobe, about 1802.

Earliest known text of the bill, printed in Williamsburg in 1779.

A BILL *for establishing* RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, *printed for the consideration of the* PEOPLE.

WELL aware that the opinions and belief of men depend not on their own will, but follow *involuntarily* the evidence proposed to their minds, that Almighty God hath created the mind free, and manifested his Supreme will that free it shall remain, by making it altogether insusceptible of *restraint*; That all attempts to influence it by *temporal* punishments or burthens, or by civil incapacitations, tend only to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness, and are a departure from the plan of the holy author of our religion, who being Lord both of body and mind, yet chose not to propagate it by coercions on either, as was in his Almighty power to do, but to extend it by its influence on reason alone; That the impious presumption of legislators and rulers, civil as well as ecclesiastical, who, being themselves but fallible and uninspired men, have assumed dominion over the faith of others, setting up their own opinions and modes of thinking as the only true and infallible, and as such, endeavouring to impose them on others, hath established and [illegible]

WE the General Assembly of *Virginia* do enact, that no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious Worship place or Ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief, but that all men [illegible]



THE JEFFERSON MEMORIAL: Washington, D.C.



FEDERALIST CARTOON: An engraving dated August 16, 1793. Thomas Jefferson (standing on the table) and David Rittenhouse (admiring Saturn through a telescope) are shown associating with the Devil, cut-throats, anarchists and other dissidents.

THE PROVIDENTIAL DETECTION: A cartoon attack on Jefferson, probably issued in 1800, during his first campaign for the presidency. His enemies misrepresented a letter from him to Philip Mazzei as an attack on American principles. The American Eagle snatches the Constitution to prevent Jefferson from casting it into the flames on the "Altar to Gallic Despotism." The eye of Providence looks on.



THE PROVIDENTIAL DETECTION



JOHN ADAMS: A portrait by Mather Brown, owned by Thomas Jefferson.



JAMES MADISON.

JAMES MADISON: An engraving by an anonymous artist.

JAMES MONROE: Pastel portrait by James Sh

about 1795, now in Ind *Hall, P*





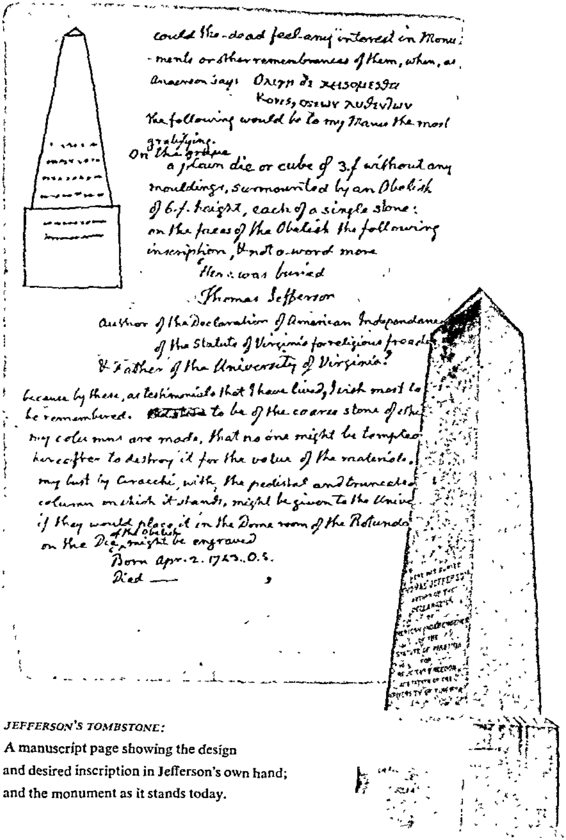
JAMES MADISON: An engraving by an anonymous artist.

JAMES MONROE: Pastel portrait by James Sharples about 1798, now in Independence Hall, Philadelphia

II

THE LIVING DECLARATION

by MORTON WISHENGRAD

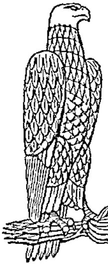


could the dead feel any interest in Monuments or other remembrances of them, when, as Anacreon says Ὀλίγη δὲ κεισόμεσθα
κόνις, ὀστέων λυθέντων
the following would be to my Manes the most gratifying.
On the grave
a plain die or cube of 3.f without any mouldings, surmounted by an Obelisk of 6.f. height, each of a single stone: on the faces of the Obelisk the following inscription, & not a word more

"Here was buried
Thomas Jefferson
Author of the Declaration of American Independance
of the Statute of Virginia for religious freedom
& Father of the University of Virginia."

because by these, as testimonials that I have lived, I wish most to be remembered. ~~[illegible]~~ to be of the coarse stone of which my columns are made, that no one might be tempted hereafter to destroy it for the value of the materials. my bust by Ciracchi, with the pedistal and truncated column on which it stands, might be given to the Univ. if they would place it in the Dome room of the Rotunda. on the Die of the Obelisk might be engraved
Born Apr. 2. 1743. O.S.
Died ——

JEFFERSON'S TOMBSTONE:
A manuscript page showing the design
and desired inscription in Jefferson's own hand;
and the monument as it stands today.



THE SINGER
His name was Jefferson,
  Thomas Jefferson,
And these are his words
  For you and for me.
"I set out on this ground
Which I suppose to be self-evident,
That the earth belongs always
To the living generation."

JEFFERSON
My name is Thomas Jefferson. The tender grass of one hundred and twenty-five springtimes waves green across my grave. Yet there is no great merit in the dead years. Others are longer dead than I. The dead are nothing. The dead are dead. A grave is so much earth. And flesh, in time, becomes a pebble. What endures is a man's thought, the surviving idea, the living truth in him which is never eaten by worms. And if I have given you something of truth, do not thank me for it. For no idea is any man's exclusive property; nor does any man possess less of it because other men possess all of it. He who receives an idea from me receives instruction himself without lessening mine, as he who lights his candle at my candle receives light without darkening me. And how much better to light a candle than to curse the darkness!

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
I left word, writing it plainly so there could be no error. I wrote: Choose for the stone on my grave some coarse, ordinary rock...something native and plain...that no one might be tempted to destroy it for the value of the materials. And upon this stone...inscribe only "Here was buried Thomas Jefferson, Author of the Declaration of American Independence, of the Statute of Virginia for religious freedom, and Father of the University of Virginia"—because by *these*, as testimonials that I have lived, I wish most to be remembered. *(pause)* I would speak now of the first, The Declaration of American Independence.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
On a May day in the year 1776 I knocked upon a Philadelphia door. *(sound of knock) (door creaks open)*
JEFFERSON
Is this the house of Jacob Graff, the bricklayer...?
MARY
It is. I am Mary Graff, his wife.
JEFFERSON
I was told there might be a parlor and bedroom which could be let to me. I seek lodgings.
MARY
Who are you?
JEFFERSON
My name is Jefferson.
MARY
What are you, Mr. Jefferson?
JEFFERSON
A delegate to the Continental Congress.

Characters:

JEFFERSON

MARY GRAFF

JACOB GRAFF

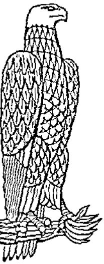
DICKINSON

LIVINGSTON

VOICE ONE

VOICE TWO

SINGER



THE SINGER
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And these are his words
For you and for me.
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Who are you?
JEFFERSON
My name is Jefferson.
MARY
What are you, Mr. Jefferson?
JEFFERSON
A delegate to the Continental Congress.

MARY
And your business there?
JEFFERSON
To promote rebellion.
MARY
Then there will be a price on your head. Why should we let you in?
JEFFERSON
Madam, do you so suspect and cross-examine everyone who knocks at your door?
MARY
These are not ordinary times. There are wild rumors and strange happenings in Philadelphia.
(pause)
You have not answered my question.
Why should we give you lodging here?
JEFFERSON
I will pay you.
MARY
Others might pay as well or more. Lodgings are scarce in Philadelphia. You must give a better reason.
JEFFERSON
American farmers lie dead at Lexington and Concord.
MARY
That is true.
JEFFERSON
And across the ocean a British King sits pampered and fat.
MARY
What do you know of the British King or any king?
JEFFERSON
I know the livestock on my farm. Madam, take any race of animals. Inbreed them. Confine them in idleness. Pamper them with high diet. Gratify all their appetites. Nourish their passions. Let everything bend before them and banish whatever might lead them to think... and in a few generations...
MARY
Yes?
JEFFERSON
They become all body and no mind.
MARY
(laughs) You do not like kings.
JEFFERSON
I do not, Mistress Graff.
MARY
Especially George the Third.
JEFFERSON
(agreeing) Especially George the Third.
MARY
And would the French monarch be any better?
JEFFERSON
Louis? Louis is a fool.
MARY
What king would you have for the American colonies?
JEFFERSON
No king. There is not a crowned head in Europe whose talents or merits would entitle him to be appointed a justice of the peace in Philadelphia.
MARY
Yes? What may I do for you, sir?
(a peal of laughter) My husband will be delighted to hear that. You may come in, Mr. Jefferson. Please be good enough to wipe your feet.

MUSIC

GRAFF
The rent is thirty-five shilling the week.
JEFFERSON
It is a good deal, Mr. Graff.
GRAFF
It is a good house. What baggage will you bring?
JEFFERSON
Not much. John Milton, Isaac Newton, John Locke.
MARY
Oh, no, sir.
JEFFERSON
You object, Madam?

MARY
The parlor and bedroom will be let only to a single gentleman. We do not give lodging to a whole company.

JEFFERSON
Mistress Graff, what man alive is not a whole company? I am my grandfather's creed, my father's prejudice, my own dissent from each. Here I show you my baggage. Read...

MARY
This notebook?

JEFFERSON
Why not? Read my baggage, Madam. I believe my notes are legible.

MARY
(reading) If for the people to have a king is pleaded as an act of God...why should not the people's rejection of a king be pleaded also as an act of God. *(pause)* Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God.

JEFFERSON
This last is from Dr. Franklin.

GRAFF
Mary, that sounds fair enough.

JEFFERSON
Do you agree with your husband, Mistress Graff?

MARY
Possibly.

JEFFERSON
Then let us read what follows. More baggage —the sentiments of John Locke, philosopher. Begin here, Mr. Graff.

GRAFF
(slowly) The state of nature has a law to govern it, and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions.

JEFFERSON
This is the sort of baggage I bring. "Man is born free and is everywhere in chains." A riddle.

GRAFF
Will you solve your riddle here in this house, Mr. Jefferson?

JEFFERSON
No. But at least I would begin here.

GRAFF
Mary, we have a lodger. Show Mr. Jefferson his rooms.

MARY
He has not told us whether he is a man of good habits.

JEFFERSON
What do you wish to know, Madam?

MARY
Are you temperate?

JEFFERSON
I drink wine but no ardent spirits.

MARY
You use tobacco.

JEFFERSON
I do not, Madam.

MARY
You are gluttonous then.

JEFFERSON
I do not think so. Vegetables constitute my principal diet.

MARY
Then of course
you must be a late riser. And I cannot abide a late riser.

JEFFERSON
Each morning I rise at dawn and bathe my feet in cold water.

MARY
(disappointed) Oh!

JEFFERSON
Is there something else, Madam? I shall be happy to answer.

MARY
Do you believe in God?

JEFFERSON
Surely, Mistress Graff, this is a matter between God and me.

MARY
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JEFFERSON
I will pay you.
MARY
Others might pay as well or more. Lodgings are scarce in Philadelphia. You must give a better reason.
JEFFERSON
American farmers lie dead at Lexington and Concord.
MARY
That is true.
JEFFERSON
And across the ocean a British King sits pampered and fat.
MARY
What do you know of the British King or any king?
JEFFERSON
I know the livestock on my farm. Madam, take any race of animals. Inbreed them. Confine them in idleness. Pamper them with high diet. Gratify all their appetites. Nourish their passions. Let everything bend before them and banish whatever might lead them to think... and in a few generations...
MARY
Yes?
JEFFERSON
They become all body and no mind.
MARY
(laughs) You do not like kings.
JEFFERSON
I do not, Mistress Graff.
MARY
Especially George the Third.
JEFFERSON
(agreeing) Especially George the Third.
MARY
And would the French monarch be any better?
JEFFERSON
Louis? Louis is a fool.
MARY
What king would you have for the American colonies?
JEFFERSON
No king. There is not a crowned head in Europe whose talents or merits would entitle him to be appointed a justice of the peace in Philadelphia.
MARY
Yes? What may I do for you, sir?
(a peal of laughter) My husband will be delighted to hear that. You may come in, Mr. Jefferson. Please be good enough to wipe your feet.

MUSIC

GRAFF
The rent is thirty-five shilling the week.
JEFFERSON
It is a good deal, Mr. Graff.
GRAFF
It is a good house. What baggage will you bring?
JEFFERSON
Not much. John Milton, Isaac Newton, John Locke.
MARY
Oh, no, sir.
JEFFERSON
You object, Madam?

MARY
The parlor and bedroom will be let only to a single gentleman. We do not give lodging to a whole company.

JEFFERSON
Mistress Graff, what man alive is not a whole company? I am my grandfather's creed, my father's prejudice, my own dissent from each. Here I show you my baggage. Read...

MARY
This notebook?

JEFFERSON
Why not? Read my baggage, Madam. I believe my notes are legible.

MARY
(reading) If for the people to have a king is pleaded as an act of God...why should not the people's rejection of a king be pleaded also as an act of God. *(pause)* Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God.

JEFFERSON
This last is from Dr. Franklin.

GRAFF
Mary, that sounds fair enough.

JEFFERSON
Do you agree with your husband, Mistress Graff?

MARY
Possibly.

JEFFERSON
Then let us read what follows. More baggage —the sentiments of John Locke, philosopher. *Begin here, Mr. Graff.*

GRAFF
(slowly) The state of nature has a law to govern it, and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind that being all equal and independent, no one *ought to harm* another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions.

JEFFERSON
This is the sort of baggage I bring. "Man is born free and is everywhere in chains." A riddle.

GRAFF
Will you solve your riddle here in this house, Mr. Jefferson?

JEFFERSON
No. But at least I would begin here.

GRAFF
Mary, we have a lodger. Show Mr. Jefferson his rooms.

MARY
He has not told us whether he is a man of good habits.

JEFFERSON
What do you wish *to know, Madam?*

MARY
Are you temperate?

JEFFERSON
I drink wine but no ardent spirits.

MARY
You use tobacco.

JEFFERSON
I do not, Madam.

MARY
You are gluttonous then.

JEFFERSON
I do not think so. Vegetables constitute my principal diet.

MARY
Then of course
you must be a late riser. And I cannot abide a late riser.

JEFFERSON
Each morning I rise at dawn and bathe my feet in cold water.

MARY
(disappointed) Oh!

JEFFERSON
Is there something else, Madam? I shall be happy to answer.

MARY
Do you believe in God?

JEFFERSON
Surely, Mistress Graff, this is a matter between God and me.

MARY
And your business there?
JEFFERSON
To promote rebellion.
MARY
Then there will be a price on your head. Why should we let you in?
JEFFERSON
Madam, do you so suspect and cross-examine everyone who knocks at your door?
MARY
These are not ordinary times. There are wild rumors and strange happenings in Philadelphia.
(pause)
You have not answered my question.
Why should we give you lodging here?
JEFFERSON
I will pay you.
MARY
Others might pay as well or more. Lodgings are scarce in Philadelphia. You must give a better reason.
JEFFERSON
American farmers lie dead at Lexington and Concord.
MARY
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JEFFERSON
You object, Madam?

Tory, scoundrel, coward, blackguard, but don't just sit there. Argue with me.

JEFFERSON

Doctor Benjamin Franklin has given as his invariable rule never to contradict anyone. I am *no Don* Quixote to bring all men by force of argument to one opinion. Each man has the inalienable right to be wrong.

DICKINSON

I could smash your face for that.

JEFFERSON

That might alter my face but not my opinion.

DICKINSON

Jefferson, listen. I shout at the top of my lungs. The Colonies and the Crown must not separate —they must conciliate. We are Englishmen, Jefferson, Englishmen. What is this fiction abroad in Philadelphia, this fiction of liars that we are Americans? There is no such thing as an American, there never was. There never will be.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON

I didn't answer—not having the words immediately at hand. But in time there came this answer from Hector St. John de Crèvecœur. "What then is the American, this new man? He is either a European or the descendant of Europeans. He is an American, who leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, received new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced. Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men... whose labors and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world. Americans are the western pilgrims...(the) new man, who acts upon new principles; he must therefore entertain new ideas and form new opinions. Sciences, vigour, and industry which began long since in the east; they will finish the great circle...The American is a new man, who acts upon new principles; he must therefore entertain new ideas, and form new opinions."

THE SINGER

I am I,
I am myself,
I am what I am now.
Not who my father was,
Not where I came from,
What I am now,
I am myself,
I am I.

JEFFERSON

A declaration does not happen of itself. The egg from which it is born comes to ripeness after a long fertilizing. The seed which germinates it—a more ancient spilling than Aristotle; more distant than Moses going forth out of Egypt; as antecedent as Adam, our first father. *(pause) This is enough of former things.* I like the dreams of the future better than the history of the past.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON

*In the month of June, 1776, a great debate chal-*lenged the delegates to the Second Continental Congress, a debate over the Virginia resolutions for a breaking of ties with the mother country. And while the debate circled and flowed I was instructed to prepare a declaration; and thus it happened that the arguments against its writing fell upon me.

LIVINGSTON

A declaration means war.

JEFFERSON

Yes, Mr. Livingston, but we are in fact at war.

LIVINGSTON

Worse—revolution.

JEFFERSON

As you pronounce the word, Livingston, and as it is in fact, it is a bitter word. Yet force must always be left as a possibility for the redress of grievances.

LIVINGSTON

You speak like Sam Adams and these Massachusetts demagogues.

MARY
Hmmm. What is your denomination?
JEFFERSON
Ah. Now we have it. The vicious, poisonous, fatal query. Very well. I have no formal creed, I belong to no party... neither political, religious, nor philosophical. If I could not go to heaven but with a party, I would not go there at all.
MARY
Be careful, Mr. Jefferson, you risk damnation.
JEFFERSON
No, Mistress Graff. I believe that God approves the open homage of reason rather than the blindfolded homage of fear and superstition. I believe—excuse me, I'm afraid I bore you.
MARY
(off) No, sir. I was thinking it might be time to make your rooms ready. I must tell you, Mr. Jefferson, you frighten me a little. You have no faith.
JEFFERSON
Then you have misunderstood me. I believe in God and have faith in reason. I have faith in truth. I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
Thus I came to the home of Jacob and Mary Graff bearing the baggage of my inheritance. The legacy of John Locke and Isaac Newton and Sir Francis Bacon transported to the house of a Philadelphia bricklayer, the child of immigrants—a good house in which to compose an American declaration. Do not be awed by this circumstance. Some men look at constitutions and declarations with sanctimonious reverence and deem them like the ark of the covenant, too sacred to be touched. They ascribe to men of the preceding age a wisdom more than human. I knew that age well. I belonged to it. I labored with it. It deserved well of its country and of you; but what it did is not beyond amendment. I remind you—the earth belongs always to the living generation. The earth belongs not to dead men, but to you.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
In the month of June, 1776, delegate John Dickinson came to my lodgings. He came to plead. He came asking a troubled question.
DICKINSON
Tell me, Jefferson, is it true?
JEFFERSON
Is what true, Mr. Dickinson?
DICKINSON
That tomorrow Congress receives a Virginia resolution declaring the colonies free and independent states.
JEFFERSON
Your information is correct.
DICKINSON
You must prevent the adoption of the resolution.
JEFFERSON
Why? I believe in the resolution!
DICKINSON
You believe in a lie.
JEFFERSON
As you wish.
DICKINSON
You believe in parricide.
JEFFERSON
If you say so.
DICKINSON
The cord between the mother country and America must not be severed. We must not dissolve our political connections with the British Crown.
(loudly) Jefferson, do you hear me?
JEFFERSON
Distinctly.
DICKINSON
Well? Do you sit there like a stone? Speak! Tell me I'm wrong. Fight me, curse me. Call me

what lives in the Declaration—and belongs to you together with the earth you inhabit. The words did not die when George the Third died. Every generation spawns its own tyrants. Therefore declare the words against the tyrants and the masters in your cities and your legisla-

[illegible]

there be a stirring of conscience. Let men stop avoiding pain and allow themselves to confront the truth. Let the motion of your blood keep time with the tumult of the world.

In the years of my life I spoke softly, never raising my voice to shout. Now in the long season of my death I *would* shout; I would cry out from the grass that covers me. Listen—in the name of your immortality—listen to the meanings of the declaration.

(sound of voices)

MARY

Mr. Jefferson, I told them you were writing. They insisted on coming in.

JEFFERSON

It is all right, Mistress Graff.

ONE

Forgive us, sir. We are importunate and unwelcome but we come for one last plea. George the Third may be a fool, but the British Crown —that is something else.

TWO

Do not break us away from the mother country. Later perhaps, but not now.

JEFFERSON

Why not now?

ONE

Because we are too young, Mr. Jefferson. We are insufficiently mature.

DICKINSON

Exactly. We are like a young child who wishes too soon to disown the parent's hand—a parent who has shielded us at every turn, and protected us at every turn.

TWO

Mr. Jefferson, there is a time to be free and a time to be protected.

JEFFERSON

I am authorized by Congress to write a declaration against protection. I am empowered to announce a Latin phrase: *Malo periculosam libertatem quam quietam servitutem*—I prefer perilous liberty to quiet servitude.

TWO

Write what you were asked to write. This is not what you were asked to write.

JEFFERSON

I was asked to write a declaration of no-dependence. To demand for the American people responsibility over their own lives. There is no freedom without responsibility. There is no freedom without danger. To be on one's own—no one to hold your hand—no king, no parliament, no legislature. Gentlemen, this is a struggle for the right to be insecure.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON

In July, 1776, I set before mankind the common sense of the subject. Nothing new. The principles written down were not original with me. How could they be? These were the thoughts of all men aspiring to something better. I set down no new arguments; stating merely what had been said many times before, arguments that were seemly, and plain, and reasonable. Perhaps one of the arguments was a little too reasonable.

ONE

Of course you know it will have to come out.

JEFFERSON

I know nothing of the sort.

ONE

Come, Jefferson, even you must realize that the slave trade cannot be condemned.

JEFFERSON

Who says that? South Carolina and Georgia? I will convince them.

JEFFERSON

I speak for myself. The intolerable thing in life is coercion. Only when coercion is used can force be justified. For years now we have been coerced by George the Third. Enough years and enough coercion.

LIVINGSTON

Perhaps there is still time to negotiate our differences.

JEFFERSON

How can you negotiate with someone who will not listen? Yes, the thought of revolution is abhorrent. But revolution means getting control of your own affairs, and that, my friend, is not abhorrent.

MUSIC

(sound of a quill scratching)

DICKINSON

The old, stable world is on fire. Jefferson, how can you write so calmly?

JEFFERSON

You mean so rudely. Forgive me, Dickinson, I forget my manners.

DICKINSON

Each word of dissolution
you write is as final and as irrevocable
as death.

JEFFERSON

Death is always a chance of life.

DICKINSON

These are the wrong words—the war can still be resolved by words of conciliation. Once your declaration is written, conciliation becomes impossible—only war is left. And, remember, we are not colonies strong and united for war. We are divided.

JEFFERSON

Division doesn't trouble me.

DICKINSON

There can be no victory without absolute and utter unity.

JEFFERSON

Only in the grave is there absolute and utter unity. The free mind is suffocated by unanimity. Difference is the healthy, living thing.

DICKINSON

In the name of heaven, Jefferson, what are you putting down on that paper? A political declaration or a philosophical treatise?

JEFFERSON

Both. What is important in this paper, Mr. Dickinson, is as much what is left unspoken as what is said. The American colonies will find their beginning now as a nation with an act of revolt. So let it be. Tell me, sir, what new idea does not begin in revolt? The American people will find their beginning as a nation in revolt and in fear, and in diversity. Good. Let us praise diversity. Dickinson, my friend and my honorable opponent, would you have us the same? Would the world be more beautiful were all our faces alike? Were our tempers, our talents, our tastes, our forms, our wishes, aversions, and pursuits cast exactly in the same mold? What do we build now—an America without variety? Where all are to think alike? Let us decide to oppose and to hate whatever robs the world of its variety and compels uniformity and monotony. Let us proclaim that the enemy is tyranny over the mind of man. Let us fire a cannon against the jailers of all ages, the intellectual prison-keepers, the civil magistrates and the religious zealots who enforce their dogmas upon those unwilling to receive them. Let us say to them, "Whose foot is to be the measure to which ours are all to be cut or stretched?" Not your foot. Not any man's foot or stamp or imprimatur.

THE SINGER

I have sworn upon the altar of God
Eternal hostility
Against every form of tyranny
Over the mind of man.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON

This is the meaning of the Declaration. This is

and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

MUSIC

ONE
Not this year, Jefferson. And granting the miracle that you could, you could not convince me and I am a Massachusetts man.

JEFFERSON
The slave trade convicts us all before the civilized world of bestiality.

ONE
It does.

JEFFERSON
I know it does, because my own hands are not clean. There are slaves in my own Virginia—on my plantation. My servant in Philadelphia is a Negro slave. I tremble for myself and for my country when I reflect that God is just; that his justice cannot sleep forever.

ONE
Amen and amen, but don't say a word about the slave trade in your declaration.

JEFFERSON
Would you have me a hypocrite?

ONE
I would have you a sensible man who understands that one thing must be done at one time, that it is immoral to sacrifice things that are possible and good in pursuit of something which is impossible now.

JEFFERSON
I have heard that voice before. Reasonable, kindly, friendly, tolerant – and always compromising with justice.

ONE
You're a harsh man for a Virginian.

JEFFERSON
Because I worry for Virginia and for the South. To see one half of our citizens trample on the rights of the other half. To have our children study their fathers who are masters over other human beings, studying their tyranny, imitating their tyranny, nursed and educated, and daily exercised in tyranny. Can a declaration for freedom be written and say nothing about that? *(pause)* Well, answer, why don't you?

ONE
We are both in the same ugly trap. North and South. New England shippers and traders make their profit from the commerce in slaves. One thing at a time, Jefferson. Political freedom now. The rest must wait for later.

JEFFERSON
I shall write a paragraph against the slave trade.

ONE
Then we shall break your heart. North and South will vote against you.

JEFFERSON
It goes in. Liberty is a specific thing. It is not a state of mind. It is not what you preach but what you carry out and do. We dare not begin upon a compromise.

ONE
(after a pause) I'm sorry, Jefferson. This is also painful for me. There is no point in saying any more. You will see, Congress will vote your clause down.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
I saw—and it was so.

MUSIC

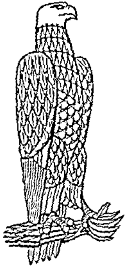
JEFFERSON
In the grave a man learns how to stop bleeding. In the grave human passions subside and judgment is an eternity. It was true—in 1776 the colonies were ready for political emancipation and for no more. Accuse us, therefore. Announce our national origin attended by much good, but also by some continuing evil. And announcing it, ask of yourself how far you yourself have travelled in one hundred and seventy-six years. *(pause)* The earth belongs always to the living generation. What has your generation done with the earth?

JEFFERSON *(continuing)*
"*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty,*

III

THE DEMOCRAT AND THE COMMISSAR

by MILTON GEIGER



MUSIC

JEFFERSON
The long, soft Virginia Spring had come again —and violets grew on my little mountain—Monticello—when my name and my spirit were invoked again. I felt the earth-borne tremor of events that walked with giants' tread. On this gentle hillside I had been a boy with Dabney Carr, my friend; and we were there together, now. And here my wife and children dwelt in the simple domesticity of the grave. But tremors shook the earth with the need of nations and of Free Men and the shock of tyrants.

MUSIC

(footsteps echoing in corridor)

ATTENDANT
Yes, sir—may I direct you, sir?

JEFFERSON
I am Mr. Jefferson.

ATTENDANT
Oh yes—you are here for the Posthumous Committee on Revolutionary Activities investigation.

JEFFERSON
Yes.

ATTENDANT
Go right inside, sir. They're expecting you.

JEFFERSON
Thank you.
(steps on hardwood now, slowly)

FRANKLIN
Mr. Jefferson! Over here!

JEFFERSON
(stops walking) Dr. Franklin! *(starts walking rapidly)* My dear Dr. Franklin, how very good to see you again! *(stops walking)*

FRANKLIN
But not unexpected, really. History makes such good scenes, it would be derelict of her not to recall members of the original companies. Tell me, how are you?

JEFFERSON
Disturbed, Dr. Franklin. The clay turns into dust to go back to the earth. Why are we recalled?

FRANKLIN
The dust, moistened with the tears of man, returns to clay and so is eligible again for human service, Mr. Jefferson.

JEFFERSON
Tell me, who is that intense gentleman at the trial table?

FRANKLIN
That, sir, is the Commissar.

JEFFERSON
He has a dedicated look.

FRANKLIN
He is a dedicated man.
He advocates a curious political-social-economic phenomenon of these times, called Communism.

JEFFERSON
I have heard of it.

FRANKLIN
Even dust is not insensible to the tramp of iron.

JEFFERSON
Are you my counsel, Dr. Franklin?

FRANKLIN
Your servant, sir.

Characters:

JEFFERSON

COMMISSAR

FRANKLIN

ATTENDANT

JUDGE

kind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

COMMISSAR

You knew then that this "separation" meant rebellion?

JEFFERSON

We all did, sir.

COMMISSAR

Rebellion, that must mean an appeal to arms.

JEFFERSON

Shots had been fired and blood already spent.

COMMISSAR

A revolution then, by force, for which you all might have been hanged for treason, had it failed.

JEFFERSON

The question is debatable. The treatment of high American prisoners by the British as prisoners and not as traitors argues against you.

COMMISSAR

Your own Dr. Benjamin Franklin, and your counsel today, is on record as saying that if you did not all hang together you assuredly would hang separately.

FRANKLIN

(off) I am not sure that I said it but history and anecdote seem fondly persuaded that I did. It seems a good enough epigram. If I did not father the thing I feel bound to adopt it. Assume I did say it and please continue.

COMMISSAR

You therefore pledged your lives, your fortunes and your sacred honor in what you asserted was the universal right to revolt!

JEFFERSON

Not quite so absolutely as you put it, sir.

COMMISSAR

(almost interrupting) And this assertion of the universal right of man to rebel against authority was approved by the unanimous vote of the thirteen colonies, is that not true?

JEFFERSON

It was unanimous indeed. However—

COMMISSAR

Do you, Mr. Jefferson, believe that all men have a natural right of revolution?

JEFFERSON

Yes.

COMMISSAR

Then revolution may be said to constitute the *official* doctrine at the birth of the American republic?

JEFFERSON

Yes, sir.

COMMISSAR

Didn't bourgeois minds of the time consider it radical?

FRANKLIN

(off a bit) Objection. I think it proper at this time to examine the meaning of the word "revolution" for those people.

COMMISSAR

It meant for them what it means for us—overthrow of government by *force*.

JEFFERSON

Overthrow of government by force *if necessary*, sir; and political revolution only, not social revolution by bloodshed and terror, class against class.

COMMISSAR

Please, Mr. Jefferson, confine yourself to answering the questions.

JEFFERSON

Gladly, sir—*if* you will confine yourself only to asking them.

COMMISSAR

I asked if conservatives of your time thought revolution radical.

JEFFERSON

Some of my most revolutionary associates [illegible]

[illegible] case.

COMMISSAR

Do you consider the tyranny of the Russian Czars an extreme case?

JEFFERSON
(reflectively) Yes, I know about this Communism. A formula, a panacea, a mithridate to cure all social ills and antidote all politic poisons, and about as reputable as a tuppenny gargle for the pox, hawked behind fences for the desperate and the ignorant.

FRANKLIN
But—such there be
and it has buyers therefor.

JEFFERSON
I am grateful to give testimony against charlatans.

FRANKLIN
Softly, sir, and correction, Mr. Jefferson. You are not here to testify *against* the Commissar.

JEFFERSON
What!

FRANKLIN
You are here to give a testimonial *for* his nostrum.

JEFFERSON
Preposterous.
I thought I was called by my own people—
not this—"Commissar."

FRANKLIN
You will reply to him,
but you will answer to us.

JEFFERSON
Trust in me.

FRANKLIN
We do.

JEFFERSON
Who judges the proceedings?

FRANKLIN
Man.

JEFFERSON
The good sense of the people will lead to justice.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
A paramount embarrassment of civilized society is to be taken for a friend when you are by no means friendly. So—mistaken for a friendly witness by the Commissar—I took the stand. He was all apology for disturbing my long residence in death. Then—

COMMISSAR
Your name, sir?

JEFFERSON
Thomas Jefferson.

COMMISSAR
Residence?

JEFFERSON
History.

COMMISSAR
Occupation?

JEFFERSON
Patriot.

COMMISSAR
Mr. Jefferson—you are the author of the Declaration of Independence?

JEFFERSON
I have the honor.

COMMISSAR
The adoption of that document was a revolutionary act.

JEFFERSON
It was.

COMMISSAR
You are aware that this investigation is under the auspices of the Posthumous Committee for Revolutionary Activities?

JEFFERSON
I am aware of it.

COMMISSAR
Why did you write the Declaration of Independence?

JEFFERSON
When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of earth the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of man-

COMMISSAR
Mr. Chairman—gentlemen of the Posthumous Committee on Revolutionary Activities. It has been my purpose to prove, as I have in fact proved, that my witness, Thomas Jefferson, acquiesces in spirit with Revolution—

FRANKLIN
Object. Mr. Jefferson has sternly qualified those circumstances which alone justify rebellion. *Political* revolution as against social and economic revolution by blood and terror—

COMMISSAR
Object!

JEFFERSON
—And as against revolution
which merely replaces one tyrant
with another.

COMMISSAR
Will the Chair rule on my objection?

JUDGE
(echo) Over-ruled. Continue.

COMMISSAR
I have made plain that Mr. Jefferson by acknowledging rebellion as obedience to God, recognizes that all who rebel are on the side of the angels, perhaps in a way that conventional religion fails to appreciate!

JEFFERSON
I will not have my words warped constantly into an endorsement of terror and the suppression of formal worship of God.

COMMISSAR
I am presenting facts to prove that Thomas Jefferson is fundamentally in agreement with the Soviet revolution.

JEFFERSON
Will the Chair permit me to speak without interruption?

JUDGE
(echo) Speak, Thomas Jefferson.

JEFFERSON
I have qualified my theory of rebellion. I have said rebellion against *tyranny;* and only as a last resort. I have held and I hold forever that all men are endowed by their *Creator with* certain inalienable rights; that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of *these ends*, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it —and to institute new government—new in form and spirit and *not*, I emphasize again, a new despotism for the old.

COMMISSAR
Object.

JUDGE
(echo) Over-ruled.

COMMISSAR
Exception.

JUDGE
(echo) Proceed.

COMMISSAR
Mr. Jefferson surely does not suggest that his *Revolution did not secure* social and economic benefits?

JEFFERSON
It was assumed that the correction of social and economic abuses would be undertaken in the ordinary course of legislation and not directly by rebellion itself. I myself returned to Virginia after writing the Declaration of Independence, and secured the passage of laws abolishing aristocracy in land ownership.

COMMISSAR
Then you admit your revolution did secure social and economic benefits.

JEFFERSON
In the ordinary course of legislation and by due process of law, these benefits were realized without purge and without bloodshed.

COMMISSAR
And do you think there is no social or economic sickness in your society today? *No poverty?* Discrimination? Racial and religious prejudice? To name a few.

FRANKLIN
(off a bit) Mr. Commissar—is Mr. Jefferson here to discuss the American Revolution and revolution itself or are you here to defend Communism?

COMMISSAR
Your honor, I ask
that Mr. Franklin's remark be stricken
from the record!

JUDGE
(echo) Strike it out.

COMMISSAR
Thank you. Do you consider the tyranny of the Russian Czars an extreme case?

JEFFERSON
I do not.

COMMISSAR
Now, Mr. Jefferson— I have here a letter which you wrote to James Madison when you were in France in 1787. Will you examine the envelope please?

JEFFERSON
Yes, sir.

COMMISSAR
It has a seal which is broken, of course. Is that seal familiar?

JEFFERSON
It is my personal seal.

COMMISSAR
Will you tell the committee and the judge the history of that seal, Mr. Jefferson?

JEFFERSON
Willingly. On July 4, 1776, Dr. Franklin, Mr. John Adams and I were appointed to bring in a device for the seal of the United States of America. The design which we recommended was by Pierre Eugène du Simitière, a Swiss artist living in Philadelphia—

COMMISSAR
Omit the details please.

JEFFERSON
I feel that all merit, however humble, merits *immortality.*

COMMISSAR
Continue.

JEFFERSON
We at length approved, also, a modified version of the design as submitted by Dr. Franklin.

FRANKLIN
(off) *Thank you for my small immortality.*

COMMISSAR
A motto was required for the seal?

JEFFERSON
Yes, sir.

COMMISSAR
Which Dr. Franklin proposed.

JEFFERSON
Yes.

COMMISSAR
What was it?

JEFFERSON
"Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God."

COMMISSAR
Was it accepted?

JEFFERSON
No, sir. We finally agreed on "E Pluribus Unum."

COMMISSAR
I will ask you to read the motto on your seal, Mr. Jefferson.

JEFFERSON
"Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God."

COMMISSAR
In other words, Mr. Jefferson, you thought enough of *that blunt, uncompromising motto* with its revolutionary doctrine, to take it for your own motto!

JEFFERSON
I did, sir.

COMMISSAR
Proving therefore not only your approval of rebellion by force, but recognizing in it the sanction of Heaven!

JEFFERSON
I repeat, sir, *political* rebellion, prudently sought, against insufferable tyranny.

and its pledge." Can they do that and claim virtue in the councils of humanity?

FRANKLIN
You chose freedom. I do not have to tell you that freedom has its jeopardies. *Malo periculosam*, Mr. Jefferson.

JEFFERSON
Yes—*Malo periculosam libertatem quam quietam servitutem*—I prefer forever freedom with danger, to slavery with ease.

FRANKLIN
Mr. Commissar,
brandishing blandishments to the gullible,
offers the latter.

JEFFERSON
They warp my words to give endorsement to *their* schemes of revolution—chaos—despotism. The eyes of the virtuous are turned with anxiety on us as the depositories of the sacred fire of liberty. Our falling into anarchy would decide the destinies of mankind and seal the political heresy that man is incapable of self-government. What can I do to set things right? The will and power of man expire with his life, by nature's law.

FRANKLIN
Your dust and phosphorus and lime lie buried on the slope of Monticello. *(curiously)* But why do you assume from that temporal circumstance that you are dead?—any more than I am, Thomas Jefferson?

MUSIC

COMMISSAR
Mr. Jefferson [illegible]
the Soviet idea.

JEFFERSON
They are poles apart.

COMMISSAR
You have made some sort of distinction between your rebellion being political and ours being social-economic.

JEFFERSON
The gulf between them is without horizon.

COMMISSAR
You say that recourse to rebellion is only for extreme cases.

JEFFERSON
Prudence indeed will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light or transient causes.

COMMISSAR
Tell me then—did you or did you not approve the French Revolution? That too was a rebellion for your fundamental human rights. That was not a change of government for light or transient causes. It was your American type of rebellion. True?

JEFFERSON
At the outset.

COMMISSAR
True?

JEFFERSON
At the outset.

COMMISSAR
Yes or no, if you please.

JEFFERSON
Yes.

COMMISSAR
You approved of it.

JEFFERSON
At the outset.

COMMISSAR
Do you deny that there are great similarities between the French Revolution and the Russian Revolution?

JEFFERSON
I cannot deny that. They were almost twin sisters in their excesses.

COMMISSAR
But you approved
of the French rebellion; do you then approve of excess?

JEFFERSON
If I may speak without interruption.

JEFFERSON
I submit that injustice under our form of government, established in the fires of *political* revolution only, is less today than yesterday; that it will be less tomorrow than today. I declare that the achievement of political independence and hence self-government is the first thing to be desired. From that, a self-governing people will solve its problems, medicate its ills in the light of reason and in the privilege of the ballot. The right of men to rebel is the right of men to rule themselves—not others.

COMMISSAR
In this same letter which you wrote James Madison in 1787 you say: "A little rebellion now and then is a good thing and as necessary in the political world as storms in the physical." Would you call your Revolution a little rebellion, Mr. Jefferson?

JEFFERSON
No, sir.

COMMISSAR
It was a considerable,
a large rebellion.

JEFFERSON
It shook the earth
from under many kings.

COMMISSAR
That is to say a little rebellion is a good thing, a large rebellion is a better thing, from which it must follow that a world rebellion is the ultimate and the best thing.

JEFFERSON
A little cupping for plethoric patients may be good for them; drain all the blood from them, they die.

COMMISSAR
Strike that from the record!

JEFFERSON
You speak of World Revolution and governments of force—

COMMISSAR
Enough, sir.

JEFFERSON
I hold, sir, that your government is a government of force, that seeks world rebellion.

COMMISSAR
Strike it out!

JEFFERSON
A government of force is a government of wolves over sheep.

COMMISSAR
I say strike it!

JEFFERSON
(mildly) But that, sir, is also in my letter. According to your own philosophy, if a little of my letter has some virtue, more of it shall have much virtue.

COMMISSAR
I ask a recess of fifteen minutes.
(gavel)

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
What had I counselled for the peoples and hoped for with my soul, that willful men should take the letter of my words and not the spirit and then corrupt the letter? My pleading had been for the right of elections by the people as a mild and safe corrective of abuses. It is only where such peaceable remedies are not provided that abuses are lopped by the sword of revolution. Truly if the counsels of the commissars were taken, the winds that shook the trees above my grave were sodden with dread miasmas. I sat with Dr. Franklin while the Commissar, like Achilles, sulked in another room.

FRANKLIN
You make a ready witness, Mr. Jefferson. It will go.

JEFFERSON
These blind inquisitors who stroke the elephant's tail and conclude the elephant is very like a rope! They take a dozen of my words from the company of a hundred and declare: "This is the Man, the Principle and the Code, and this is his United States, its sacred honor

ing a constitution by assembling wise men instead of assembling armies will be worth as much to the world as the former examples we have given it.

COMMISSAR

You used force against your own countrymen in this paragon of republics! You condemned their leaders to death!

JEFFERSON

A sentence never executed. The prisoners were all set free and, as I hoped, there were no reprisals. Anarchy existed in America in the single brief instance of Massachusetts, but can history produce an instance of rebellion so honorably conducted? I *say nothing of its motives*; they were founded on ignorance, not wickedness.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON

No country can preserve its liberties if its rulers do not heed the natural spirit of resistance to injustice among its people. I know indeed that some honest men fear that this government is not strong enough. But would the honest patriot abandon a government which has so far kept us firm and free on the theoretic and visionary fear that this republic, the *world's best hope* may by possibility lack energy to preserve itself? I trust not. I believe this, *on* the contrary, the strongest *government on* earth. Sometimes it is said that man can not *be trusted with the government of himself*. Can he, then, be trusted with the government of others? Or have we found angels in the form of dictators to govern him? Let history answer this question. *(music out)*

FRANKLIN

Let the Commissar answer it.

COMMISSAR

The concise purpose of this inquiry is not to review the merits of *so-called* democracies as contrasted to the dictatorship of the proletariat but to establish Mr. Jefferson's revolutionary ideas. *Mr. Jefferson*—not I, not History—must answer the questions.

JEFFERSON

Will the Commissar reply to a non-political *question*?

COMMISSAR

If not too personal.

JEFFERSON

(gently) Mr. Commissar—how did you die?

COMMISSAR

They liquidated me. Well, Mr. Jefferson?

MUSIC

JEFFERSON

Dabney Carr, my boyhood friend, took my *hand when* I came back to the Monticello slope *at twilight*. And Martha smiled, and evening birds sang threnodies for the day at dusk. And I lay down again to rest and pulled the sod *across* my eyes. Dusk stood in the tall pine. *Monticello*...we were all together.

How still it was. How lovely...

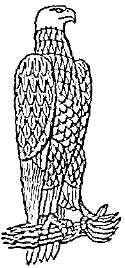
MUSIC

COMMISSAR
Just answer the questions, Mr. Jefferson.
FRANKLIN
Excuse me *for a moment. My client has been* at great pains to shake the torpor of a century and a quarter of mortal death from his spirit, *to come before this* body. He has made the journey from the grave and the bosom of his family and of Abraham, to serve again. We have interrupted his earned long Holiday; I pray you, let us not interrupt him more. Let him speak.
JUDGE
(echo) Let him speak.
FRANKLIN
Mr. Jefferson.
JEFFERSON
I did approve the French convulsion at the start. It seemed like our own rebellion based indeed on human rights. It was not a foreign ideology, like the Marxian. It was native and sympathetic to their urgent needs and dark oppressions. More, and most of all, it was a *political* revolt.
COMMISSAR
Do you call "political"
a revolution where the proletariat shouts,
"Down with the aristocrats"? Or is it *social,* Mr. Jefferson! Social!
JEFFERSON
It was political at first. The rebellion went too fast, I thought, and it turned out I was right. The execution of their king was too much. It lost sight of principles. Its attacks on property were wrong. The Revolution got involved with the politics of Europe and like the Russian Revolution launched upon a career of Imperialism. And Americans were not interested in French *Imperialism.*
COMMISSAR
Strike it out. The testimony is unresponsive.
JUDGE
(echo) The testimony is significant. *It remains.*
JEFFERSON
By Napoleon's time the Revolution was Imperialism. It was Liberty warring against itself and I abhorred it then.
COMMISSAR
Perhaps you forget, Mr. Jefferson, that Liberty warred against Liberty in your own country. Let me refresh you on the matter of Daniel Shays and his rebellion. In 1786 the farmers of Massachusetts, desperately oppressed by debt, the stagnation of commerce, and the scarcity of money, rebelled in arms. Their pleas went unanswered by their governors and they revolted. The rebellion against tyrants that you condone and celebrate in your personal seal! Do you try to deny that Shays's Rebellion was unjustified?
JEFFERSON
The acts of the rebels
were irregular interpositions of the people
and not justifiable.
COMMISSAR
Have you not said that the spirit of resistance to government is valuable on certain occasions?
JEFFERSON
On certain occasions, indeed. It will often be exercised when wrong, but better so than not to be exercised at all. Shays's Rebellion was wrong.
COMMISSAR
The people had a just grievance.
JEFFERSON
True.
COMMISSAR
Your troops put down the revolt with force.
JEFFERSON
Troops of the State of Massachusetts—*not* Federal troops. These events stimulated the movement for a new American Constitution. The consequences *of Shays's Rebellion deepened* my conviction that whenever our affairs go obviously wrong the good sense of the people *will set them to rights.* The example of chang-

IV

DIVIDED WE STAND

by MORTON WISHENGRAD



SINGER
(an introductory chord...hums and continues under)

VOICE
This story is true in a way, precisely because it is false in a way. Certain of the events have been imagined, but the words of Thomas Jefferson are in the spirit in which he spoke—and his spirit is for now.

SINGER
What moves the spirit, my good brother?
Shall I tell you, my good brother
What moves your soul?
Oh, the spirit is of God,
And the spirit is born free.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
The day I died, I remember that they wept. For I left no son. But they were wrong to weep. Though I lie dead beneath the earth, yet you stand living upon it; and your earth is green and sweet. I know this and I know more. I know many, many things, but none more surely than that I love you. For whoever you are, you are my son; whatever you call yourself, you are my name. And so stand beside me and do not go away. Be near me this small while and listen if you will, for I have a thing to tell you.

MUSIC
(a duet for harpsichord and violin)

JEFFERSON
It was early autumn in the year 1776. Mrs. Jefferson played a harpsichord; I followed as best I could on the violin. In Philadelphia a great bell had been sounded; at Lexington and Concord the blood of freemen stained the ground; in Williamsburg a Virginia legislature awaited my arrival. And yet I tarried at Monticello. For Mrs. Jefferson was not well and I was anxious for her. *(cut the sound of the violin)*

MARTHA
Oh, please don't stop. We'll play it again, we'll play it better. *(cut the harpsichord—which trails off)*

JEFFERSON
Dr. Gilmer will be here in a few minutes.

MARTHA
You mustn't be troubled because of me. I am really quite well. Well enough to accompany you to Williamsburg.

JEFFERSON
The music has taxed your strength.

MARTHA
It is my best medicine—music again and having you here at Monticello.

JEFFERSON
Martha, I am away too much. You are quite right to reproach me.

MARTHA
I could never reproach you.

JEFFERSON
Then I reproach myself. When I was alone at Philadelphia, it was gratifying to know that I was sharing in the councils of a new government. And yet—

MARTHA
Yes?

Characters:

JEFFERSON

MARTHA JEFFERSON, HIS WIFE

DR. GILMER

MCCORMICK

MADISON

PENDLETON

MRS. CAMPBELL

DR. BRYDON

BRAXTON

VOICE ONE

VOICE TWO

SINGER

JEFFERSON
(laughs) Well, then—firstly—I have seen physicians adventure boldly into the unknown—establishing some fanciful theory of corpuscular attraction, of chemical agency, of depletion by blood-letting and repletion by mercury. Sometimes, in spite of the lancet and the medicine, the patient even gets well.

GILMER
(laughs) Quite true. In the present state of medical knowledge it requires a hardy patient to survive his physician. Well, be assured about your wife. I have prescribed no blood-letting, no potions, pills, or nostrums. Your lady is somewhat drawn and fatigued to be sure, but unless I am mistaken about her condition I dare say she is strong enough to bear your son.

JEFFERSON
Gilmer, I am a blind fool!

GILMER
Where are you going?

JEFFERSON
To her, of course.

GILMER
She is resting, and happy.

JEFFERSON
I shall write to the legislature and ask to be excused.

GILMER
Your neighbors elected you to represent them in the legislature. I cast my own vote for you. As a matter of fact I have brought someone *with* me who is most anxious to inform you how he wishes his vote to be represented. *(calling)* McCormick! *(to Jefferson)* Your permission, sir?

JEFFERSON
You need not ask, Doctor.

GILMER
My good friend, McCormick, is not of Albemarle County, yet he comes to you and not to his own elected representative.

JEFFERSON
Why is that, Mr. McCormick?

MCCORMICK
In Philadelphia you wrote a word for political liberty. Perhaps in Williamsburg you will write a word for a more fundamental liberty.

JEFFERSON
Go on, sir.

MCCORMICK
Over in the Valley I am a Justice of the Peace. An officer of the law, sworn to uphold the law.

JEFFERSON
That should not be so difficult.

MCCORMICK
Each day I violate the law I am sworn to uphold.

JEFFERSON
How so?

MCCORMICK
The Virginia Statute of [illegible]

JEFFERSON
I take it you do not attend worship.

MCCORMICK
No, sir, not in the established Church.

JEFFERSON
I am afraid my minister holds a similar grievance against me.

MCCORMICK
Ah, but you are a vestryman of the established Church, and I am a dissenter from it, as many of us are in the Valley. Mr. Jefferson, we and our churches are outside the law of Virginia. There are punishments prescribed for us who dare to dissent, punishments and disabilities.

JEFFERSON
We are tolerant in Virginia. When has the law ever been exercised *against you*?

MCCORMICK
Not once. But that is not the point. The law is a Virginia statute. The law I am bound to uphold and which I am bound to violate.

JEFFERSON
I found that I was unhappy. It required that I go away to discover in myself the sources of myself.

MARTHA
Can you tell me?

JEFFERSON
I'm not sure I can.
I know now that it isn't fame I crave.
It is to be here.

MARTHA
That makes me happy.

JEFFERSON
I am at peace here. This house, my books, this Virginia landscape—going among my neighbors, making small talk of ploughs and harrows and seed and harvest. Martha, I puzzle myself. Why am I preparing to leave now to go to Williamsburg?

MARTHA
Because you are needed at Williamsburg.

JEFFERSON
I do not delude myself that I am indispensable to them. I cringe at the prospect of rising to speak before the legislature. I am no orator, my dear.

MARTHA
I praise God for it.

JEFFERSON
You praise God for inconsequential things.

MARTHA
Oh, no. Each morning of my life when I awaken from the death of sleep, I go to where little Patsy is sleeping and I say, "Dear God, together in strength is all we ask."

JEFFERSON
(after a pause) Martha.

MARTHA
Yes, my dear.

JEFFERSON
Who are we to be blessed with so much happiness when our young world is in so much pain?

MARTHA
That is why you must go to the Virginia legislature. And if Dr. Gilmer allows it, I shall go with you. Now, until he comes—please, let us play.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
Her face was pale. It seemed to me that her face had been pale for so many months. Plainly it taxed her strength to play and plainly also the music was her benison. For me as well. On an autumn day in the year 1776 Martha Jefferson and I made a devotion of melody unto Him who had created the universe and endowed it with His design—and I was content. *(pause)* We continued so until Dr. Gilmer arrived. And, after Dr. Gilmer had spoken with her, he and I sat together in the garden. *(a sound of birds)*

GILMER
Mrs. Jefferson is not entirely well, but then she is not seriously ill.

JEFFERSON
You are quite sure, Doctor?

GILMER
Of course not.

JEFFERSON
That's what I like about you. You are not a presumptuous man.

GILMER
And I suppose other physicians are?

JEFFERSON
Aren't they?

GILMER
You do not like my breed, do you?

JEFFERSON
I like you.

GILMER
What is it you hold against my profession?

JEFFERSON
It would bore you, Doctor.

GILMER
I prepare myself for boredom. Proceed, sir.

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(laughs) Well, then—firstly—I have seen physicians adventure boldly into the unknown—establishing some fanciful theory of corpuscular attraction, of chemical agency, of depletion by blood-letting and repletion by mercury. Sometimes, in spite of the lancet and the medicine, the patient even gets well.

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GILMER
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JEFFERSON
I like you.
GILMER
What is it you hold against my profession?
JEFFERSON
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GILMER
I prepare myself for boredom. Proceed, sir.

JEFFERSON
Because the magistrates are kindly people.
MRS. CAMPBELL
Suppose there are new magistrates next month or next year? What if they are less kind?
McCORMICK
Exactly.
JEFFERSON
It is a foolish law and a most pernicious one.
McCORMICK
Aye, that's the proper word—
pernicious. Sir, I would tell you something of my own creed.
JEFFERSON
Do not, Mr. McCormick.
McCORMICK
Don't you want to hear it?
JEFFERSON
These are private matters, sir. Our principles of religion are a subject of accountability only to God. I inquire after no man's faith; I would trouble no man with my own. No man has power to let another man prescribe his faith. Faith is not faith without believing.
MRS. CAMPBELL
I am a believing Baptist.
But I am taxed to support the minister of the established Church.
JEFFERSON
Mrs. Campbell, I will try to do something about this.
MRS. CAMPBELL
Thank you, but there's more.
McCORMICK
Aye, there is. Mr. Jefferson, do you know my curious friend Andy Jameson?
JEFFERSON
I'm afraid I do not.
McCORMICK
A rare man. As proper an atheistical gentleman as ever blasphemed God.
MRS. CAMPBELL
May heaven defend him from himself.
McCORMICK
Heaven must—because Virginia law would burn him for heresy.
JEFFERSON
Come now, Mr. McCormick. When did Virginia execute any man for heresy?
McCORMICK
Never. But Massachusetts by law *murdered* innocent men and women *for almost similar* offenses. Do not tell me that this happened in a crueler age. Because I could not hear you. My ears and my eyes are filled with the words of the law as it stands. The law which some day could murder Andy Jameson. The law is a tyrant, Mr. Jefferson. We ask you to change the law.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
Wherever you are, do you still turn your eyes longingly to the past? There was glory in the past, yet tyranny also; I who know would remind you that the past contains its own dark record of persecution, and its own dark record of evil. In the autumn of 1776 I began to read the record of the law. It was a distracted reading, for always before me was the face of Mrs. Jefferson—a sweet face which could not conceal her own pain. I sent for Dr. Brydon.
BRYDON
The pulse is more rapid than I like.
JEFFERSON
She seems always to be fatigued. It wearies her to rise and it wearies her to stay abed.
BRYDON
Mr. Jefferson, your wife must rest as much as possible. You must keep her from the excitement of this place.
JEFFERSON
I try to do so, Doctor. *(pause)* Is there some restorative you can prescribe?
BRYDON
Bread pills, a few drops of colored water, and some powders of hickory ashes.

JEFFERSON

You are not wrong, Mr. McCormick, the law is wrong.

MCCORMICK

Therefore change it, sir, for by that law I am torn in my conscience.

JEFFERSON

So am I, Mr. McCormick. What you say is good enough reason to send me at once to Williamsburg. But there are private reasons to keep me here. Are there not, Dr. Gilmer?

GILMER

You are probably right. Still, there is Mr. McCormick to be considered.

JEFFERSON

Yes, a sizeable dilemma. Gentlemen, it occurs to me that if we are made in some degree to serve others, yet in a greater degree we are made to serve ourselves. Does Mrs. Jefferson have a lesser right than my neighbors?

MCCORMICK

I may not answer, Mr. Jefferson. No man has a right to speak for more than his own conscience.

JEFFERSON

(a puzzled laugh) Therefore, I dare not speak for Mrs. Jefferson, dare I, Dr. Gilmer?

GILMER

And Mrs. Jefferson desires that you attend the sessions of the Virginia legislature and that she be permitted to go with you. You are given no choice.

JEFFERSON

So it would seem. You see what you have done, Mr. McCormick. You have prepared for me a riddle of choice in which I have no choice.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON

In the year 1776, upon a riddle of choice, Mrs. Jefferson and I arrived at Williamsburg, where we took residence at the house of my good friend George Wythe. Mrs. Jefferson was greatly fatigued by her journey, yet her first wish was that we announce our presence in the manner she loved best.

MUSIC
(duet for harpsichord and violin)

JEFFERSON

I no longer recall what it was that we played, but there was healing for her in the sound. It was as if she knew that the time given to her for the music of life was to be scant in years; and therefore she was jealous for each moment, searching each moment for its melody and its grace note. *(music stops)* It was a perishable, fragile, fading sound interrupted much too soon by those who had no choice but to interrupt. *(sound of voices)*

MCCORMICK

I am an importunate man, Mr. Jefferson, pursuing you as I do about the country. Sir, I believe you know Mrs. Campbell.

MCCORMICK

Madam, will you be so good as to inform Mr. Jefferson of the occasion for this visit?

MRS. CAMPBELL

Sir—I have been ravaged.

JEFFERSON

Indeed, Madam!

MRS. CAMPBELL

In my conscience, Mr. Jefferson. Like Mr. McCormick I am a dissenter against the established Church of Virginia.

MCCORMICK

And against me. I am a Presbyterian, this good lady considers herself a Baptist.

MRS. CAMPBELL

Therefore, by Virginia law, Mr. Jefferson, I am deemed incapable of receiving any gift or legacy.

JEFFERSON

Have no fear, Mrs. Campbell, the law will not be used against you.

MRS. CAMPBELL

How do I know that, sir?

JEFFERSON
Because the magistrates are kindly people.

MRS. CAMPBELL
Suppose there are new magistrates next month or next year? What if they are less kind?

MCCORMICK
Exactly.

JEFFERSON
It is a foolish law and a most pernicious one.

MCCORMICK
Aye, that's the proper word—
pernicious. Sir, I would tell you something of my own creed.

JEFFERSON
Do not, Mr. McCormick.

MCCORMICK
Don't you want to hear it?

JEFFERSON
These are private matters, sir. Our principles of religion are a subject of accountability only to God. I inquire after no man's faith; I would trouble no man with my own. No man has power to let another man prescribe his faith. Faith is not faith without believing.

MRS. CAMPBELL
I am a believing Baptist.
But I am taxed to support the minister of the established Church.

JEFFERSON
Mrs. Campbell, I will try to do something about this.

MRS. CAMPBELL
Thank you, but there's more.

MCCORMICK
Aye, there is. Mr. Jefferson, do you know my curious friend Andy Jameson?

JEFFERSON
I'm afraid I do not.

MCCORMICK
A rare man. As proper an atheistical gentleman as ever blasphemed God.

MRS. CAMPBELL
May heaven defend him from himself.

MCCORMICK
Heaven must—because Virginia law would burn him for heresy.

JEFFERSON
Come now, Mr. McCormick. When did Virginia execute any man for heresy?

MCCORMICK
Never. But Massachusetts by law murdered innocent men and women for almost similar offenses. Do not tell me that this happened in a crueler age. Because I could not hear you. My ears and my eyes are filled with the words of the law as it stands. The law which some day could murder Andy Jameson. The law is a tyrant, Mr. Jefferson. We ask you to change the law.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
Wherever you are, *do you still turn your* eyes longingly to the past? There was glory in the past, yet tyranny also; I who know would re-

[illegible]

[illegible] I began to read the record of the law. It was a distracted reading, for always before me was the face of Mrs. Jefferson—a sweet face which could not conceal her own pain. I sent for Dr. Brydon.

BRYDON
The pulse is more rapid than I like.

[illegible]

[illegible] wearies her to stay abed.

BRYDON
Mr. Jefferson, your wife must rest as much as possible. You must keep her from the excitement of this place.

JEFFERSON
I try to do so, Doctor. (pause) Is there some restorative you can prescribe?

BRYDON
Bread pills, a few drops of colored water, and some powders of hickory ashes.

JEFFERSON
What will they accomplish?

BRYDON
The appearance of doing something. And that will be good for her. It will sustain her hope. You see, Mr. Jefferson, with all my learning, I am little more than a pious fraud.

JEFFERSON
She wants to bear this child.

BRYDON
I count on it. The best medicine is that which is manufactured by our own desire for life.

JEFFERSON
Mrs. Jefferson is fortunate in her physician.

BRYDON
And in her husband. I would be blind indeed if I did not see that your work here is of great moment to her. Of great moment to all of us, sir.

JEFFERSON
You press me also, Doctor? It comes from all sides.

BRYDON
I am a member of the established Church. The law taxes me to contribute my little sum toward its maintenance. I do not mind the contribution; what I mind very much is that I am compelled to do what I would do without compulsion in the first place.

JEFFERSON
Yes, Doctor, it is coercion that is the evil thing. And there is some irony in all this. Against my inclination I am coerced to remain in Williamsburg in order to fight against coercion.

BRYDON
Whatever your personal misgivings, remain here, Mr. Jefferson. As for your wife, I will do for her the best I can. I fight a sickness of the human body. You must fight a sickness of the human mind.

JEFFERSON
The disease of the strangling of conscience.

BRYDON
You must make this plain to the legislature. And plainest of all to our friends, Mr. Nicholas and Mr. Pendleton. They are the most affable and generous of men, but they stand for strangulation.

MUSIC

PENDLETON
I am always happy to be with you, Jefferson, but—

JEFFERSON
But why, Pendleton, did I summon you so urgently?

PENDLETON
Yes.

JEFFERSON
I am troubled.

PENDLETON
Mrs. Jefferson?

JEFFERSON
Yes—but something else—a bill to guarantee religious liberty will be presented to the legislature within the next few days—a bill which will become an engine of acrimony between dear friends.

PENDLETON
You and me.

JEFFERSON
And others of my neighbors.

PENDLETON
I am not surprised.
There has been some talk of it. You know the ground I stand on.

JEFFERSON
For a church established by the state and maintained by public taxation.

PENDLETON
I do not budge from that ground.

JEFFERSON
Pendleton, the care of every man's soul belongs to himself.

PENDLETON
A pretty statement, my dear Jefferson, but

shallow. What if a man neglect the care of his soul?

JEFFERSON
What if the same man neglect the care of his health? What if he allow his harvest to waste in the ground and his buildings to tumble? Will the magistrate make a law that he be not poor or sick?

PENDLETON
You speak of temporal things and I speak of God.

JEFFERSON
God himself will not save men against their wills.

PENDLETON
But I would try to do God's work—so that one day men may be brought to life eternal—by means of the orthodox church.

JEFFERSON
Mr. McCormick declares that the Presbyterian church is the only orthodox church.

PENDLETON
Mr. McCormick is in grave error. There is only one orthodoxy.

JEFFERSON
Therefore every Baptist and Quaker, every Roman Catholic and Jew is guilty of heresy.

PENDLETON
I am afraid so.

JEFFERSON
Pendleton, tell me this: what am I to you?

PENDLETON
The dearest of friends.

JEFFERSON
May it always be so. But I am also your mortal enemy. *(pause)*

PENDLETON
You do me some injustice. Mr. Nicholas and I will consent to the elimination of punishments and imprisonments for religious dissent.

JEFFERSON
Will you agree that a wall of separation be raised between Church and State?

PENDLETON
No, Jefferson, on that we can never agree.

JEFFERSON
You will continue to tax those who do not believe as you do?

PENDLETON
I must. My sense of morality dictates it.

JEFFERSON
The self-same morality teaches you to love your neighbors, to do good to all men—even Mr. McCormick, who is a Presbyterian, Mrs. Campbell a Baptist, and one Andrew Jameson who calls himself atheist.

PENDLETON
I do not hate them.

JEFFERSON
But you refuse to let *them alone*. You will call your religion orthodox and all other religions heresy. And heretic though they be you will place upon them the tax of your orthodoxy.

PENDLETON
But I will not punish them.

JEFFERSON
Oh, but you will be compelled to, Pendleton, for they will not pay your taxes. What will you do then?

PENDLETON
I suppose I shall make them pay.

JEFFERSON
And if they refuse? Imprisonment. However leniently you begin, this is how any compulsion must end—imprisonment.

PENDLETON
My party is in the majority.

JEFFERSON
Some day *they* may be in the majority. Will you allow them to impose a tax for their denominations against you?

PENDLETON
I shall have to consider it.

JEFFERSON
I refuse to consider it. At Philadelphia in July we established a nation upon principles of po-

JEFFERSON
What will they accomplish?
BRYDON
The appearance of doing something. And that will be good for her. It will sustain her hope. You see, Mr. Jefferson, with all my learning, I am little more than a pious fraud.
JEFFERSON
She wants to bear this child.
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I count on it. The best medicine is that which is manufactured by our own desire for life.
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And in her husband. I would be blind indeed if I did not see that your work here is of great moment to her. Of great moment to all of us, sir.
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I am a member of the established Church. The law taxes me to contribute my little sum toward its maintenance. I do not mind the contribution; what I mind very much is that I am compelled to do what I would do without compulsion in the first place.
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JEFFERSON
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BRYDON
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JEFFERSON
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PENDLETON
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BRAXTON
Mr. Jefferson, the floor is yours.

JEFFERSON
(coming to foreground) Gentlemen, suppose the State should take into its head that there should be a uniformity of countenance? Men would be obliged to put an artificial bump or swelling here, a patch there, until wearing a mask of hypocrisy we should all look alike. But God has not made us to look alike. How can that be the church of Christ which excludes such persons from its communion as he will one day receive into the Kingdom of Heaven?

PENDLETON
My dear Jefferson, there is only one path toward the Kingdom of Heaven.

JEFFERSON
I could not say, Mr. Pendleton. I do not know. But grant your assumption. Suppose a man err from the right path? It is his own misfortune. It is no injury to [illegible]

[illegible] your one, single, established, sovereign church is such a supposition. And it goes in the face of the Holy Scriptures upon which it is founded... "He that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith ..for whatsoever is not of faith, is sin." I ask an end of the religious compulsion which leads to hypocrisy and to sin.

BRAXTON
Mr. Jefferson, what is your proposal to this body?

JEFFERSON
A Bill for Religious Freedom. That we, the General Assembly of Virginia, do enact that no man shall be compelled to frequent *or support* any religious worship, place or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, *restrained*, molested, or burthened in his body or goods...on account of his religious opinions *or beliefs;...* but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion, and that the same shall in nowise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities.
(pause)

PENDLETON
Mr. Jefferson, your bill will never pass this Assembly.

JEFFERSON
I have been taught patience, Mr. Pendleton; there will be other assemblies in Virginia. They will pass it. *(pause, and softly)* Now if this Assembly permits, I will request a leave of absence that I may return to Monticello.
(pause)

PENDLETON
She continues to ail, then?

JEFFERSON
(softly) Yes, Pendleton. I shouldn't have brought her; perhaps I should not have come myself.

PENDLETON
I am sorry. I shall pray for her.

JEFFERSON
I will tell her, Pendleton. I know it will comfort her.

PENDLETON
God bless you, my friend.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
And so, carrying the blessing of Edmund Pendleton, Martha Jefferson and I returned to Monticello.

MUSIC
(duet for harpsichord and violin)

JEFFERSON
There is something in the human spirit that never perishes, that remains unbending in the presence of sickness and which refuses to acknowledge death. And so for a brief moment upon a Virginia mountain, Martha Jefferson played a harpsichord and I followed as best I could upon a violin. And then upon a day of sunshine and greening trees our son was born—and seventeen days later *(music stops)* our son

litical liberty. Now in October, in Williamsburg, Virginia, we must begin to establish principles of religious freedom. To save ourselves from future dissension and destruction we must grant each human being the free right of conscience and tell a world that watches us that in matters of opinion our philosophy is: Divided we stand, united we fall. Because unity of opinion is uniformity. Because uniformity of conscience is coercion. And coercion is the greatest of all tyrannies over the mind of man.

SINGER
No man, my good brother, no man
Has power to let another
Prescribe his faith.
For faith is not faith without believing.

In faith, my good brother, let us now say,
To all other men of good faith,
Divided we stand,
United we fall.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
Do you suppose it is an easy thing to stand in debate against those whom you love? Do you suppose it is a simple thing to oppose your spirit against the spirit of those whom you cherish? In that Virginia legislature of 1776 we were neighbors and friends. Together we had come to manhood. Together we had pledged resistance to political tyranny and seen together how the children of our neighbors had marched away to make a pledge and a surety for us of their lives. And now I was rising in this assembly of togetherness to say that in some things we dared not be together.

BRAXTON
Mr. Jefferson has asked the floor. Mr. James Madison as well.

JEFFERSON
Mr. Chairman.

BRAXTON
The Chairman of your Committee recognizes Mr. Thomas Jefferson of Albemarle County.

JEFFERSON
Mr. Chairman, I would yield to Mr. Madison without prejudice.

BRAXTON
Mr. Madison has the floor.

MADISON
Mr. Chairman, gentlemen, both Mr. Jefferson and I are sensible of the fact that this Committee has made a great concession to us.

PENDLETON
Hear, hear.

MADISON
You are agreed upon toleration of the dissenting religious minorities.

PENDLETON
Do you want more, Mr. Madison?

MADISON
You grant only half. Mr. Jefferson and I ask for all.

VOICE
Take half, sir, for in truth you will not get all. *(laughter)*

MADISON
The fire does not burn half, it burns all. A man does not half drown. Either he drowns or lives. You admit, and we thank you for it, for it is indeed a concession from a position of complete intransigence, that the free exercise of public worship for dissenters should now be granted. But to it you attach a most damaging qualification. Free exercise, yes, but at the discretion of the established Church.

VOICE
And what do you ask, Mr. Madison?

MADISON
Free exercise without qualification. In short, Mr. Jefferson and I assert the principle of no man's right to tolerate religious opinion, since I would deny your right to tolerate me, or my convictions. I yield now to Mr. Jefferson.

V

FREEING THE LAND

by JOSEPH MINDEL

died. There is little else to say now. The Bill for Religious Freedom was passed in time by a Virginia Legislature and made into the Bill of Rights of the American people; but Martha Jefferson did not live to see this triumph of her own free spirit. On the sixth of September, 1782, there died the gentlest woman I ever knew. They wept for me the day she died because I had no son. They were wrong to weep. For whoever you are, you are my son. Whatever you call yourself, you are my name. I know this, I know many, many things, but none more surely than that I love you. And for you and for no one else I left word that they inscribe upon my grave a legacy for you.

SINGER

Author of the Declaration of American
  Independence,
Of the Statute of Virginia for Religious
  Freedom
And Father of the University of Virginia.
Because by these,
As testimonials that I have lived,
I wish most to be remembered.

MUSIC

V

FREEING THE LAND

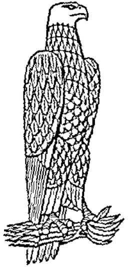
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Author of the Declaration of American Independence,
Of the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom
And Father of the University of Virginia.
Because by these,
As testimonials that I have lived,
I wish most to be remembered.

MUSIC



MUSIC

(quill pen scratching on paper)

JEFFERSON

(writing) My dear friend. How many letters have I written since my arrival in France, and how few have I received from my friends at home! I sincerely wish you may find it convenient to come here; the pleasure of the trip will be great, but the utility greater. It will make you adore your own country, especially its equality, liberty, and laws. How little do my countrymen know what precious blessings they are in possession of.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON

The years from 1784 to 1789 I spent in France, most of them as Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States to that country. From my first acquaintance, I was much pleased with the people [illegible] that a n[illegible] ing a si[illegible] by chance, you arrived at a doorway at the same instant as a Frenchman, then invariably—

FRENCHMAN

Monsieur, please do me the honor of preceding me.

JEFFERSON

Or, if by an unfortunate accident, you stepped on a stranger's toe—

FRENCHMAN

A thousand pardons, Monsieur. I am a clumsy ox.

JEFFERSON

A Frenchman never said No, and it was difficult for a stranger to know when he meant No. *(grim)* But, of twenty millions of people supposed to be in France, I am of the opinion there are nineteen million more wretched, more accursed in every circumstance of human existence than the most conspicuously wretched individual of the whole United States. *(brief pause)* One morning, having followed the King to Fontainebleau, where he went in the autumn to hunt, I set out to take a view of the place. *(sound of foosteps on gravel)* As soon as I had got clear of the town, I fell in with a woman of the laboring poor, walking at the same rate and in the same direction.

(footsteps louder, catching up with woman's footsteps)

WOMAN

(startled) Your pardon, My Lord.

JEFFERSON

Pardon? There is no need. I was about to—

WOMAN

I will get off the path.

JEFFERSON

There is room enough for us both.

WOMAN

I would have cleared the way, but I did not hear your steps, My Lord.

JEFFERSON

I am not a lord, my good woman.

WOMAN

You are pleased to make sport of a poor woman.

Characters:

JEFFERSON

FRENCHMAN

WOMAN

FARMER

LAFAYETTE

MADISON

PENDLETON

CAPTAIN

BRONSON

VOICE

the spring of the year 1787, I travelled for several months through the south of France, with letters of introduction unopened in my pocket, carefully keeping myself out of the way of good dinners and good company.

FARMER
You are a stranger, Monsieur. The chateau you are undoubtedly looking for is on the other side of the town.

JEFFERSON
I am not looking for the chateau.

FARMER
Oh. You have already seen it. Then perhaps the cathedral, which is said to be very old.

JEFFERSON
I am no more interested in the cathedral.

FARMER
Of course, there are other sights which I am certain you would be pleased with.

JEFFERSON
I would be pleased to talk with you for a little while.

FARMER
Me, Monsieur? Why should a fine gentleman like you want to talk to a simple farmer?

JEFFERSON
I have the habit of inquiry—a habit of long standing—and if you do not mind—

FARMER
I am afraid you will waste your time. *(simply)* I am a very ignorant person.

JEFFERSON
I am curious to know about *your* land.

FARMER
It is not my land. I rent it from the Seigneur de Laye.

JEFFERSON
Is it good land? Does it provide for you and your family?

FARMER
Good? I will tell you, Monsieur. My grandfather had eight children—*(afterthought)* seven girls and a boy. I have three.

JEFFERSON
About the land?

FARMER
My children go hungrier more often than did his, though he had no more land than I.

JEFFERSON
The soil must be rested and replenished.

FARMER
(agreeing) Yes. Like a person.

JEFFERSON
You do not fertilize the soil?

FARMER
Let me show you a handful. Do not touch it. You will dirty your hands.

JEFFERSON
Then I will wash them. The soil is dry, impoverished.

FARMER
The soil is hungry.

JEFFERSON
Yet you do not fertilize it.

FARMER
My lease is for three years, as are most leases in the province.

JEFFERSON
And at the end of three years?

FARMER
Maybe the land will be mine again. Maybe not. Then why should I feed the soil?
(pause)

JEFFERSON
It is a difficult question to answer.

FARMER
Still, this year the grape vines may yield *enough* to pay the rent.

JEFFERSON
I have tasted the wines in all the southern provinces.

FARMER
Monsieur, if you will do me the honor of coming to my house, *there* is a bottle or two of last year's vintage.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
No. In my country, there are no lords. Tell me, how can I reach the mountain I see there?
WOMAN
Why, by this path, My—*(stops)* I am going there myself, Monsieur.
JEFFERSON
Then we can walk together.
WOMAN
Oh, no! That is, Monsieur, I walk slowly.
JEFFERSON
I am in no hurry.
WOMAN
As you wish, Monsieur.
(both pairs of footsteps resume)
JEFFERSON
I hope you will not object if I ask a question.
WOMAN
Why should I object, Monsieur?
JEFFERSON
What do you do, where you are going?
WOMAN
I am a day laborer.
JEFFERSON
And what is your work?
WOMAN
If there are stones to be carried, I carry them. Or else, I work with the hoe, or at the anvil.
JEFFERSON
A woman? At the anvil or carrying burdens, like a porter?
WOMAN
My children are hungry, Monsieur.
JEFFERSON
Yes. For this work, how much are you paid?
WOMAN
Eight sous by the day.
JEFFERSON
Eight sous—four pence. It is very little.
WOMAN
It buys bread.
JEFFERSON
It must also pay the rent of your house.
WOMAN
Thirty livres, the work of seventy-five days.
(footsteps stop)
JEFFERSON
But that is impossible!
WOMAN
Is it, Monsieur?
JEFFERSON
How can you and your children live?
WOMAN
We live.
JEFFERSON
What of the days when you don't work?
WOMAN
On those days, Monsieur, my children and I—we try not to be hungry.
JEFFERSON
It is a bitter joke.
WOMAN
(quickly) Please understand, Monsieur! I do not complain!
JEFFERSON
You have cause to complain!
WOMAN
It is better to have eight sous than to be hungry.
(pause)
JEFFERSON
Thank you for showing me the way. I will go more quickly now. *(sound of coins)* Here. Please take them. *(pause)* They are all the coins I have. It is very little I know—only twenty-four sous. *(pause)* Don't you understand? They are for you, because—because you have been my guide. Please take them.
(pause)
WOMAN
(begins to sob softly)

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
This incident, with the solitude of my walk, led me into a train of reflections on the causes of such poverty. But I soon had accumulated other incidents to provide food for thought. In

how cheap a thing is happiness, how expensive a one is pride.

LAFAYETTE
(after a pause) Tell me what you learned.

JEFFERSON
Yes. I will tell you. I learned that so much land is owned by a handful of landlords, that the people are without land, that this lack is the greatest cause of their poverty, that— *(breaks off)* But you must see it for yourself.

LAFAYETTE
Do you know, my dear Jefferson, that I have never travelled in the southern provinces.

JEFFERSON
Then you must do it. And to do it most effectually you must be absolutely incognito.

LAFAYETTE
It has an uncomfortable sound. Without my coach?

JEFFERSON
And without your footmen. You must ferret the people out of their hovels, as I have done, look into their kettles, eat their bread, loll on their beds, pretending to rest, but in fact to find if the beds are soft.

LAFAYETTE
I do not have to make such a trip to know they are hard.

JEFFERSON
But when you learn it of yourself, then you will be able to apply the knowledge to the softening of their beds, or the throwing a morsel of meat into their kettle of vegetables.

LAFAYETTE
Jefferson, if you were not an American, I could wish that you were a Frenchman.

JEFFERSON
(as if not hearing) For do we not agree that the first and only legitimate object of good government—and those who govern—is not the destruction, but the care of human life and happiness?

MUSIC

(quill pen scratching on paper)

JEFFERSON
(writing) "Seven o'clock, and retired to my fireside, I have determined to enter into conversation with you," I wrote to James Madison in Virginia. I was an American, and all that I observed in France, I considered as it applied to America. Often, I wished that I could talk with my friends thousands of miles across the ocean, as I talked with Lafayette. And this evening, it seemed to me that Madison was in my room, and that I spoke to him, and he answered.

MADISON
You are much moved by what you have seen.

JEFFERSON
Madison, I visited a chateau, whose seigneur employed two hundred servants as domestics. And every day, there came dozens of people—men, women, even children—willing to work, unable to find work, begging for bread.

MADISON
This misery, you think, is caused by the lack of land.

JEFFERSON
There is no lack. You have not seen, as I have, how the property, the land, of France is absolutely concentrated in a very few hands—how thousands of acres are kept wild, uncultivated, to support game, that the aristocracy may hunt.

MADISON
And yet, they could increase their revenues by letting their lands be worked.

JEFFERSON
With an income of half a million or more, it is easy to be indifferent to a few thousands.

MADISON
Jefferson, tell me what you think. If the lands in Europe which are now dedicated to the amusement of the idle rich were parcelled out among the idle poor, would that relieve the misery?

(clink of bottle on glass)

JEFFERSON

(tasting the wine) It is a sound wine.

FARMER

Last year was one of the better years. Wine is good with bread. Monsieur?

JEFFERSON

Thank you.

FARMER

It is a little stale, but we bake only once in four weeks.

JEFFERSON

To save time?

FARMER

To save bread, Monsieur.

JEFFERSON

I see. At Pommard and Voulenay, I observed that they ate good wheat bread. Your bread is of rye.

FARMER

Ah, at Pommard and Voulenay they are lucky!

JEFFERSON

Good luck often accompanies greater industriousness.

FARMER

You do not understand, Monsieur. You see, they make red wine there, we make white.

JEFFERSON

I do not see the relation between the wine and the bread.

FARMER

It is simple. White wines fail in quality much oftener than red, and cannot be sold.

JEFFERSON

Then the solution is also simple. Grow the red grapes and make red wine.

FARMER

You saw our land, Monsieur. There is too much stone for the red.

JEFFERSON

And therefore you eat inferior bread.

FARMER

When we are lucky.

JEFFERSON

On such slight circumstances depends the condition of man!

MUSIC

JEFFERSON

I was never satiated with rambling through the fields and farms, observing the conditions of man, with a degree of curiosity which made some take me to be a fool and others to be much wiser than I am. The condition that I observed was mainly that of misery. If the farmer was overworked because of the excess rent required by the landlord, he had at least a reasonable assurance of bread. But the most numerous of all classes was the poor that had no land and worked by the day or, unable to find work, begged for bread. I spoke of what I saw with one who was also concerned with the condition of man—the Marquis de Lafayette.

LAFAYETTE

I would have liked to be with you on your trip.

JEFFERSON

We would have had much to discuss. Yet I think one travels more usefully when alone, because he reflects more.

LAFAYETTE

(laughs) Always the practical man. Is utility the sole purpose of travel?

JEFFERSON

(seriously) I believe
that travel makes a man wiser,
but less happy.

LAFAYETTE

I will not argue with you. But to be without companions! I am a gregarious man. I should be lonely.

JEFFERSON

Would you? When I retire at night to my chamber in an inn, all my possessions in a single portmanteau, all my cares circumscribed by the walls of the room, unknown to all, unheeded and undisturbed—my friend, I discover again each time how few are our real wants.

BRONSON
Now what do I want with a tinker?

CAPTAIN
Hear me out, Sir. He wants to be a farmer. To learn how, he'll indenture himself for five years.

BRONSON
Hmph. I am not conducting a school for farmers.

CAPTAIN
He is a good man.

BRONSON
Well–how much, Captain?

CAPTAIN
Young, strong, willing.

BRONSON
How much?

CAPTAIN
For you, Mr. Bronson–*(calculating)*–forty pounds.

BRONSON
I will have to teach him how to plough. Thirty pounds.

CAPTAIN
Thirty-five.

BRONSON
Agreed. *(louder)* Innkeeper! Another rum for the Captain!

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
Many of the poor of Europe came to America as indentured servants, to work for a master for a term of years. During the time of their servitude, they were better fed, better clothed and had lighter labor than in the countries from which they came. But it was servitude, no less real because of limited duration and self-imposed–an exchange of freedom for relief from hunger. *(brief pause)* The needy man is not a free man.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
Who can better outwit necessity than a farmer on his piece of land? The small landholders are the most precious part of a state, and therefore the land must be made available. For land tends to accumulate in the hands of the few, depriving the people of its use. This I saw in my own state of Virginia, and for this reason, in the year 1776, eight years before I stepped on the soil of France, I rose in the Virginia Legislature–

PENDLETON
(off) I yield the floor to Mr. Jefferson.

JEFFERSON
Thank you, Mr. Pendleton. At my *request*, there is on the floor of this house a bill to abolish entails. I rise to speak for the bill.

PENDLETON
(off) We have heard Mr. Jefferson on this subject before.
(scattered "ayes" and some laughter)

JEFFERSON
You will have to hear me again, Mr. Pendleton. For I am convinced that the holding of lands in tail, rather than in fee simple, works to the detriment of any society.

PENDLETON
(off) You talk in generalities, Mr. Jefferson.

JEFFERSON
Then I will be particular: In the earlier days of the colony, when lands were to be *obtained* for little or nothing, a certain Mr. Charles Smith procured large grants–

PENDLETON
(off) Now you are compiling a treatise.

JEFFERSON
I *am* following your suggestion, sir. You are a difficult man to please.

PENDLETON
(off) I ask your pardon, sir. I will not interrupt you again.

JEFFERSON
Thank you. This Mr. Smith settled the lands on his [illegible]
never [illegible]
from g[illegible] to generation, from the past

JEFFERSON

I am aware that an equal division of property is impracticable. But it is possible to invent devices.

MADISON

For what purpose?

JEFFERSON

For the purpose of preventing the improper concentration of wealth. Laws allowing inheritance by all the children, and not by the eldest son alone. Or increasing taxes in proportion as wealth increases.

MADISON

I suspect there would be many objections to your devices—and perhaps not only from those with the most property, the most land.

JEFFERSON

There must inevitably be objections. But whenever there are in any country uncultivated lands and unemployed poor, it is clear that the laws of property have been so far extended as to violate natural right. Madison, the earth is given as a common stock for man to labor and live on.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON

A man learns in many ways. I learned much in the five years I spent in France. But long before I saw with my own eyes the causes and consequences of poverty and land-hunger, I knew them. I knew that freedom is a delicate state of balance. For freedom presupposes a *choice among several alternatives, which the* tyranny of need reduces, and thereby destroys. The needy man is not a free man.

When I was younger, there was common in American newspapers, a certain type of advertisement.

CAPTAIN

Just arrived from Scotland, a parcel of choice Scotch servants—tailors, weavers, shoemakers and ploughmen, some for five and others for seven years—to be sold on reasonable terms.

JEFFERSON

From Scotland, *from England, from* many countries in Europe, they came thus to America. The different nationalities were appraised and rated by careful merchants and the fittest import seasons considered. The profits were great.

BRONSON

What are you drinking, Captain?

CAPTAIN

Rum, thank you kindly, Mr. Bronson.

BRONSON

Innkeeper! Rum for the Captain!

CAPTAIN

Nothing for yourself, Mr. Bronson?

BRONSON

I have made it a rule never to drink during business hours.

CAPTAIN

Oh. I see. *(sound of tankard on table)* Ah. Here 'tis. To your very good health, sir.

BRONSON

And yours. Now, Captain, what have you for me?

CAPTAIN

(wiping his lips) You read my advertisement.

BRONSON

Yes, yes. But I want particulars.

CAPTAIN

Well, there's Peter Martin.

BRONSON

How does the man come to be in your parcel? *I always ask, Captain. No offense meant.*

CAPTAIN

None taken, Mr. Bronson. The usual story—anxious to settle in America, and no money for passage.

BRONSON

He's not a convict,
or a rascal of some sort?

CAPTAIN

Certainly not, Sir. He was a good, honest tinker.

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or a rascal of some sort?

CAPTAIN
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statutes from that period to the present day to Mr. Wythe--and I will take the Virginia laws. Is that agreeable, gentlemen?

JEFFERSON
I have a question, Mr. Pendleton.

PENDLETON
Yes, Mr. Jefferson?

JEFFERSON
The law of descents falls within my portion. I wish the committee to settle the leading principles, as a guide to me in re-framing the law.

PENDLETON
Under the circumstances I would say that the committee could rely on Mr. Jefferson's own judgment. *(ad lib agreement)* But he is right in asking the committee's guidance. *(brief pause)* I think I know what he has in mind.

JEFFERSON
Do you, Mr. Pendleton?

PENDLETON
I do, Mr. Jefferson. Mr. Wythe, gentlemen, let him be instructed by the committee to preserve the right of primogeniture.

JEFFERSON
(laughs) I was about to propose the abolition of the law of primogeniture, so that land as well as personal property will be divided equally among all the children, instead of being inherited by the eldest son alone.

PENDLETON
It is an old and well established rule, well worth retaining.

JEFFERSON
Mr. Pendleton, you seem to have a great attachment to ancient establishments.

PENDLETON
Are you opposed to the past, sir, because it is old?

JEFFERSON
No, sir. I believe in history. I believe we must learn from it and reject that which no longer is applicable. The abolition of primogeniture would remove the old feudal distinctions which tended to make one member of every family rich and all the rest poor.

PENDLETON
You would frame a law directing every man how to bequeath his property.

JEFFERSON
Nothing would prevent a man from leaving all his property to his eldest son.

PENDLETON
But if he left no will?

JEFFERSON
Then his estate would be equally divided among all his heirs.

PENDLETON
Sir, the family is the unit on which society is based. Laws should be designed to protect and nourish the family.

JEFFERSON
I would go further, Mr. Pendleton. I believe the laws should be framed to protect the rights of every individual in the family.

PENDLETON
Mr. Jefferson, between you and me there can be no common ground on the right to own property. I appeal to you, gentlemen, to vote with me to retain primogeniture. *(pause)* I see you will not. *(quickly)* Then I propose that we adopt the Biblical principle and give a double portion to the elder son.

JEFFERSON
I would agree, sir--if the eldest son could eat twice as much or do double work. Mr. Pendleton, I wish to make it possible for every man who wants it to own his land.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
It was eight years before the Legislature acted on the work of the committee and passed the bill to abolish primogeniture. I was then in France, where I first heard a nightingale and where I saw with my own eyes the consequences of the concentration of land ownership. And

into the future, indefinitely. Is this a wholesome thing, Mr. Pendleton?

PENDLETON
(nearer) I would not speak, but you have asked me a question. Assuredly it is good, for it safeguards the providence and foresight of your Mr. Smith.

JEFFERSON
I know a man, James Thompson is his name, who wants to buy a few acres of this land to support himself and his family. The present Mr. Smith is willing to sell, but cannot because he holds the estate in tail.

PENDLETON
I would say it is unfortunate
for James Thompson, but a fine thing for the Smith family.
(ad lib approval)

JEFFERSON
For the right of entail has raised up a distinct set of families, privileged by law in the perpetuation of their wealth, and thus formed into a patrician order, an aristocracy.

PENDLETON
You speak disparagingly of aristocracy, Mr. Jefferson. Surely I do not have to remind you that *aristoi* has the meaning of excellence.

JEFFERSON
I am against an aristocracy of wealth, Mr. Pendleton. I want to make an opening for the aristocracy of virtue and talent, which nature has wisely scattered with an equal hand through all the conditions, among the poor as well as among the rich.

PENDLETON
Come, sir. We are legislators. Let us be practical. You know as well as I that from among the wealthy, the educated, come the men with desire and ability to govern.

JEFFERSON
I have not observed that a man's honesty or ability increases with his riches.
(laughter)

JEFFERSON
To abolish entails no violence is necessary, no deprivation of natural right, but rather an enlargement of it.

PENDLETON
Mr. Jefferson, some three months ago, we adopted a declaration of independence, establishing certain rights and liberties, which you would now take away.

JEFFERSON
Where in the declaration will you find a reference to property, Mr. Pendleton? Whenever excessive ownership is permitted to endanger the right to life and happiness, whenever property is opposed to natural right, I believe there is no alternative but to uphold the rights of man.
(ad lib approval)

JEFFERSON
Gentlemen, I ask for the abolition of entails, so that the land may be free--free from the past, free for the present. For the earth belongs always to the living generation.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
I have sometimes asked myself whether my country is the better for my having lived at all. Once I set down a list of things I had been the instrument of doing, and among the first was the law to abolish entails, which the Virginia Legislature passed on October 21, 1776--thus lessening the artificial perpetuation of wealth and preserving the land for the people.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
But the task was not yet ended. A few days later, the Legislature appointed a committee--Wythe, Pendleton, myself, and others--to revise the laws of Virginia. In January of the next year, we met in Fredericksburg to plan our work.

PENDLETON
The common law and statutes to the time of James I to you, Mr. Jefferson — the British

VI

TO SECURE THESE RIGHTS

by JOSEPH MINDEL

I rejoiced that in Virginia we had freed the land for the living generation.

VOICE

(accusing) Mr. Jefferson seems to think that the farmers on their land are in some way closer to God than other men.

JEFFERSON

There were many such voices.

VOICE

(accusing) He disapproves of, he would like to discourage, commerce.

JEFFERSON

They recognize me as a friend of the farmer and suppose me an enemy to the only means of disposing of his produce, through commerce, the handmaiden of agriculture.

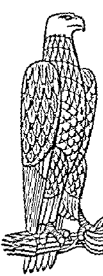
VOICE

He has said that manufacturing should be resorted to only of necessity, not of choice, to support the surplus of people who cannot find land.

JEFFERSON

I do not like the effects of manufacturing on the people who work at it. But times have changed since the early days of the country, and we can not all be farmers. We have no paupers. The great mass of our population is of workers; our rich, who can live without labor, being few and of moderate wealth. Most of the laboring class possess property, cultivate their own lands, have families and from the demand for their labor are enabled to exact from the rich such prices as enable them to be fed abundantly, clothed above mere decency, to labor moderately and raise their families. This has come from a due balance between agriculture, manufactures and commerce. In so complicated a science as economics, no one axiom can be laid down as wise and expedient for all times and circumstances. Nothing is unchangeable but the inherent and inalienable rights of man.

MUSIC



MUSIC

JEFFERSON

The mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few booted and spurred, ready to ride them, by the grace of God. All men are possessed of rights, which no government is entitled to deprive them of, but rather is government instituted among men in order to secure these rights. No experiment could be more important than that which we tried, in my generation, to establish the fact that man may be governed by reason and truth. A voice from the past can speak with knowledge of things past. Whether, in your time, the experiment is ended and the fact established—that is for you to determine.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON

In 1785, not ten years after the beginning of the American experiment, I was in France with my fellow commissioners, Benjamin Franklin and John Adams, to negotiate commercial treaties with the nations of Europe. *(brief pause)* I am ready to say to every human being "thou art my brother" and to offer him the hand of concord and amity. But it was not easy in the case of the British minister to France, the Duke of Dorset.

(pause)

DORSET

Gentlemen, before we go further, there is a question I would ask.

JEFFERSON

I shall be happy to answer, sir.

DORSET

Then tell me, Mr. Jefferson, by whose authority do you and your colleagues enter these proposed negotiations with His Majesty's Government?

JEFFERSON

It is a strange question. You know that we represent the United States of America.

DORSET

Then I presume that you hold commissions from each of the thirteen states.

JEFFERSON

No. We are commissioned by Congress, which has that power under the Articles of Confederation.

DORSET

I see. My question is answered, Mr. Jefferson.

JEFFERSON

It was no question, sir. You are driving at a point which it would be more expeditious to bring into the open.

DORSET

As you wish. Let us suppose that we have reached certain agreements, sir. What assurance do I have that the states will adhere to them?

JEFFERSON

They are bound by the Articles to do so.

DORSET

In theory, yes. But, Mr. Jefferson, we both know that in practice, this has not always been so. Will Congress send a federal militia to enforce the agreement? *(pause)* I will not embarrass you, sir, by pressing for an answer.

Characters:

JEFFERSON

DORSET

MADISON

WASHINGTON

VOICE ONE

VOICE TWO

THREE

WOMAN

boats row across the river from Paulus Hook to Cortlandt Street.

TWO
We are familiar with local geography.

ONE
On the way, they must pass the customhouse.

TWO
Naturally.

ONE
Why should they not stop
and pay entrance fees--like the ships from
London or Hamburg?
(pause)

TWO
It is an ingenious device.

ONE
I am pleased that you like it, Sir.

TWO
I did not say that. I was wondering what the Jerseymen will do.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
The Jerseymen retaliated. New York had bought a patch of ground on Sandy Hook to erect a lighthouse. The New Jersey legislature placed an exorbitant tax on the land. I would not deny what was true; there were trade disputes between the states, and quarrels over territory. New York and New Hampshire both claimed the region of Vermont, which declared itself independent and, it was rumored, negotiated for return to England's dominion. In the Wyoming Valley, between Connecticut and Pennsylvania, dispute became conflict.

THREE
You were warned to go back to Connecticut. This is Pennsylvania land.

WOMAN
Our homes are here. We do you no harm.

THREE
You have one hour to gather together your possessions.

WOMAN
The fields are planted. Who will harvest them?

THREE
Listen to me, all of you! Empty your houses or we will burn them as they stand! Get your men to--*(stops)* The men are not here. *(fiercely)* Where are the men?

WOMAN
(gasps) You are hurting my arm.

THREE
Where are the men?
(a single shot, brief pause, then ragged volleys, with slight echo)

JEFFERSON
In 1784, less than a year after the treaty of peace with England, my countrymen fired at each other. Congress was sitting in Philadelphia, when another incident occurred.
(soldiers marching, coming closer)

JEFFERSON
Some eighty soldiers of the Pennsylvania line broke from their camp and marched to the State House, led by a sergeant.

ONE
Halt!
(marching out--unmilitary)
I'll do the talking. You men support my arguments--with your guns.

JEFFERSON
They drew up in a line and made their demands.

ONE
We want our pay!

JEFFERSON
There was no money. Congress had made requisitions upon the states--but there was no money.
(window smashed by stone)

JEFFERSON
The soldiers threw stones and pointed their muskets threateningly.

ONE
If we don't get our money, we'll hold Congress until we do!

JEFFERSON
It is thoughtful of you, sir, but entirely unnecessary. Especially since it would appear that you are not concerned about concluding a treaty.
DORSET
Mr. Jefferson, the disunity of your states makes it likely that Britain can achieve its ends without a treaty.
JEFFERSON
Sir, I am not suited by temperament for begging. A commercial treaty between us will be of benefit to both our countries.
DORSET
I agree that America would surely profit. But I fail to see any advantage to Great Britain.
JEFFERSON
We are a young country,
on the edge of a vast continent. It is inevitable that we shall grow.
DORSET
Let us be practical. What have you to offer?
JEFFERSON
Sir, I offer the future of the United States.
(pause)
DORSET
I cannot but admire your patriotism. But, Mr. Jefferson, it is an exaggeration to speak of the states as united.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
I might have replied, as I did on another occasion, that the Confederation was a wonderfully perfect instrument, considering the circumstances under which it was formed. I might have said that if all the evils that could arise among us, from the republican form of government, from this day to the day of judgment, could be put into a scale against what France suffered from its monarchial form in a week, or England in a month, the latter would preponderate.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
I might have said these things, and they would have been true. But I could not deny what was equally true—that there was a serious lack of unity among the states. When Massachusetts closed her ports to English ships, in retaliation against British discrimination, Connecticut promptly threw hers wide open—and laid duties upon imports from Massachusetts.
JEFFERSON *(continuing)*
And in New York City, the governing council met for a special purpose.
CAST
ad lib pre-meeting hubbub
(gavel twice)
ONE
Gentlemen, you have heard the report. You are now aware that thousands of dollars are being carried out of the city—and into the pockets of Jerseymen.
TWO
It is an unusual way of describing the ordinary processes of trade.
ONE
I am describing the facts, sir.
TWO
But you neglect to add that for the dollars we receive butter and cheese, chickens and garden vegetables from the New Jersey farms.
ONE
Yes. To the detriment of our own farmers and of domestic industry!
TWO
But our New York farmers cannot supply the city's needs.
ONE
Nevertheless, dollars are leaving the city.
TWO
Do you suggest, sir,
that we should stop eating butter and cheese and vegetables?
ONE
(after a pause) Gentlemen, the Jersey market

boats row across the river from Paulus Hook to Cortlandt Street.

TWO
We are familiar with local geography.

ONE
On the way, they must pass the customhouse.

TWO
Naturally.

ONE
Why should they not stop
and pay entrance fees--like the ships from
London or Hamburg?
(pause)

TWO
It is an ingenious device.

ONE
I am pleased that you like it, Sir.

TWO
I did not say that. I was wondering what the Jerseymen will do.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
The Jerseymen retaliated. New York had bought a patch of ground on Sandy Hook to erect a lighthouse. The New Jersey legislature placed an exorbitant tax on the land. I would not deny what was true; there were trade disputes between the states, and quarrels over territory. New York and New Hampshire both claimed the region of Vermont, which declared itself independent and, it was rumored, negotiated for return to England's dominion. In the Wyoming Valley, between Connecticut and Pennsylvania, dispute became conflict.

THREE
You were warned to go back to Connecticut. This is Pennsylvania land.

WOMAN
Our homes are here. We do you no harm.

THREE
You have one hour to gather together your possessions.

WOMAN
The fields are planted. Who will harvest them?

THREE
Listen to me, all of you! Empty your houses or we will burn them as they stand! Get your men to--*(stops)* The men are not here. *(fiercely)* Where are the men?

WOMAN
(gasps) You are hurting my arm.

THREE
Where are the men?
(a single shot, brief pause, then ragged volleys, with slight echo)

JEFFERSON
In 1784, less than a year after the treaty of peace with England, my countrymen fired at each other. Congress was sitting in Philadelphia, when another incident occurred.
(soldiers marching, coming closer)

JEFFERSON
Some eighty soldiers of the Pennsylvania line broke from their camp and marched to the State House, led by a sergeant.

ONE
Halt!
(marching out--unmilitary)
I'll do the talking. You men support my arguments--with your guns.

JEFFERSON
They drew up in a line and made their demands.

ONE
We want our pay!

JEFFERSON
There was no money. Congress had made requisitions upon the states--but there was no money.
(window smashed by stone)

JEFFERSON
The soldiers threw stones and pointed their muskets threateningly.

ONE
If we don't get our money, we'll hold Congress until we do!

JEFFERSON
It is thoughtful of you, sir, but entirely unnecessary. Especially since it would appear *that you are not concerned about* concluding a treaty.

DORSET
Mr. Jefferson, the disunity of your states makes it likely that Britain can achieve its ends without a treaty.

JEFFERSON
Sir, I am not suited by temperament for begging. A commercial treaty between us will be of benefit to both our countries.

DORSET
I agree that America would surely profit. But I fail to see any advantage to Great Britain.

JEFFERSON
We are a young country,
on the edge of a vast continent. It is inevitable that we shall grow.

DORSET
Let us be practical. What have you to offer?

JEFFERSON
Sir, I offer the future of the United States.
(pause)

DORSET
I cannot but admire your patriotism. But, Mr. Jefferson, it is an exaggeration to speak of the states as united.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
I might have replied, as I did on another occasion, that the Confederation was a wonderfully perfect instrument, considering the circumstances under which it was formed. I might have said that if all the evils that could arise among us, from the republican form of government, from this day to the day of judgment, could be put into a scale against what France suffered from its monarchial form in a week, or England in a month, the latter would preponderate.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
I might have said these things, and they would have been true. But I could not deny what was equally true—that there was a serious lack of unity among the states. When Massachusetts closed her ports to English ships, in retaliation against British discrimination, Connecticut promptly threw hers wide open—and laid duties upon imports from Massachusetts.

JEFFERSON *(continuing)*
And in New York City, the governing council met for a special purpose.

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ad lib pre-meeting hubbub
(gavel twice)

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Yes. *To the detriment* of our own farmers and of domestic industry!

TWO
But our New York farmers cannot supply the city's needs.

ONE
Nevertheless, dollars are leaving the city.

TWO
Do you suggest, sir,
that we should stop eating butter and cheese and vegetables?

ONE
(after a pause) Gentlemen, the Jersey market

ganize the federal government into separate legislative, executive, judiciary. These will remedy serious defects of the Confederation.

MADISON

They are needed changes, Jefferson, but not sufficient, for our affairs approach close to chaos and anarchy.

JEFFERSON

I have heard much of anarchy. Where does this anarchy exist?

MADISON

I do not consider the rebellion of Shays in Massachusetts a sign of political health.

JEFFERSON

We have had thirteen states independent eleven years. There has been one rebellion. Madison, I think that my friends in America are too much impressed by the insurrection in Massachusetts.

MADISON

It is a symptom of the weakness of the government, Jefferson, it cannot last. We are faced with a dissolution of the union—unless we act.

JEFFERSON

To act may be good or bad—depending on the direction in which you act.

MADISON

Supporters of liberty must make every concession, without infringing on fundamental principles, in favor of a stable government.

JEFFERSON

I will not deny that the federal government under the [illegible] ditions [illegible] energe [illegible] always oppressive.

MADISON

You are far removed from the scene, Jefferson. Perhaps so far that you cannot be aware how close the government's weakness brings us to a dissolution of the union.

JEFFERSON

It is not by the concentration of power, but by its distribution that good government is effected.

MADISON

Jefferson, the danger is immediate. Tremble for the issue.

JEFFERSON

There is another danger, Madison. If I am far from America, I am closer to the seats of monarchy, to the evils of power in the hands of kings and nobles.

MADISON

I am aware of it, and I think our views are not too far apart.

JEFFERSON

I am glad of it, Madison. Whatever form the government may take, it must affirm the inalienable rights of man.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON

Events move men beyond the orbits in which they have travelled. The Virginia Legislature, largely at the instigation of Madison and Washington, invited the states to meet in September of 1786 to consider commercial reforms. The convention was a failure, but out of it grew another convention, to be held the following year, with another and greater purpose.

ONE

Resolved that a convention of delegates be held for the sole purpose of revising the Articles of Confederation to render the federal constitution adequate to the exigencies of government and the preservation of the union.

JEFFERSON

Faced with the alternatives of anarchy or tyranny, they rejected both and chose the course of orderly deliberation. In May of 1787, in the state house at Philadelphia, in the same room where, eleven years before, the Declaration of Independence had been signed, the delegates met in an atmosphere whose solemnity was expressed by General Washington.

JEFFERSON

Congress appealed to the Governor of Pennsylvania, to the city of Philadelphia, for protection. But none was given. The government of the United States fled across the river from a handful of mutinous soldiers.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON

There were some who laughed at the affair and laughed at Congress. But there was no cause for laughter in the profound discontent, not only of the soldiers, but of the farmers as well. Burdened with debt, seeing their homesteads sold for payment of foreclosed mortgages, the farmers grew desperate.

TWO

Daniel Shays,
in the name of the Commonwealth
of Massachusetts, I call upon you to disband your men and lay down your arms!

JEFFERSON

The Shays Rebellion, in 1786, could no longer be considered a small incident. Out of the turmoil of the times, out of the conflicts and rebellions, came fear, and ideas born of fear, dangerous suggestions made even to General Washington. Before the end of the war, he had received a letter from a certain Colonel Nicola.

THREE

This war must have shown to all, and to military men in particular, the weakness of republics.

JEFFERSON

The thought was in the minds of many men, but Nicola went further.

THREE

If you would consent to be the head of such a government as I propose, it may be requisite to find some title apparently more moderate than that of king.

JEFFERSON

Whatever the name, they wanted to make Washington king.

WASHINGTON

Be assured, sir, no occurrence in the course of the war has given me more painful sensations than the information that such ideas exist in the army, and I must view them with abhorrence and reprehend them with severity.

JEFFERSON

General George Washington might have become, if he chose, George I of America. The moderation and virtue of a single character probably prevented the American Revolution from being closed, as most others have been, by a subversion of that liberty it was intended to establish. *(brief pause)* General Washington was afraid for the liberties of his country.

WASHINGTON

That it is necessary to make changes, I entertain no doubt; but what may be the consequences of such an attempt is doubtful. Yet something must be done or the fabric must fall. It is certainly tottering.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON

I spoke often about what should be done with my friend, James Madison. *(brief pause)* Spoke? From 1784 to 1789, we were separated by an ocean, yet I think it is only a small change in the sense of the word to say that we spoke. Every ship that sailed between us carried my letters or his, so that I could almost hear his voice—

MADISON

Our situation grows worse daily, so that I almost despair of any remedy.

JEFFERSON

We are not permitted to despair, Madison. I hesitate, at the distance at which I find myself, to make suggestions.

MADISON

I always find your advice welcome.

JEFFERSON

To make us one nation as to foreign affairs, and keep us distinct in domestic ones—to or-

MADISON
The question thus is whether a majority, centered about any common interest or feeling any common passion, will find sufficient motives to refrain from oppressing the minority.

JEFFERSON
I would offer such motives as religion, or the residue of goodness in all men, or enlightened self-interest, except that—

MADISON
Except that history has shown that these motives are never sufficient to prevent the oppression of the minority by the majority.

JEFFERSON
(sighs) I agree—reluctantly. It is a pessimistic view on which to found a system of government.

MADISON
But a realistic one, Jefferson. And therefore the laws of the individual states must be subject to the negative or veto of the national legislature.

JEFFERSON
Here I part company with you, Madison. I do not like it. Some control of an inevitable evil is necessary. But the hole and the patch should be commensurate. And you propose to mend a small hole by covering the entire garment.

Madison, in my own way, I am a practical man. I would not bestow power when it is not necessary and I would take power away whenever it is greatly concentrated—whether it be in a king or in a legislature. Only so will the rights of the people be safe.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
The people waited for news of the convention, but the secret was well kept. And knowing little, they speculated much. From New Hampshire to Georgia, the convention was the topic of their talk.

THREE
Elizabeth! *(tankard on table)* Liz! Two ales here.

As I was saying—this convention at Philadelphia—I will be greatly surprised if something good comes of it.

ONE
Will you? Now I have hopes. Did you see the list of the members in the Gazette? *(rustle of newspaper)* Where is it? Ah, here. Look—all distinguished names. Not to speak of General Washington, their president.

THREE
I know, I know. But tell me—what is at the bottom of all the troubles in the country?

ONE
Well, now, I—

THREE
I'll tell you. Not even General Washington can persuade the states to pay money or part with power. They all want to hold on to what they've got and to go their own way. You know, this is a big country—the thirteen states and all that western country to the Mississippi River. It will take a strong hand to hold all this together permanently. *(drinks)* I may tell you—in the strictest confidence, you understand—

ONE
Of course.

THREE
Then I may tell you that the delegates are considering very seriously *(lowers his voice)* the establishment of a monarchy.

ONE
No!

THREE
Yes. They will send to England for the king's son and crown him king over this continent.

ONE
I do not believe it.

THREE
As you like. Perhaps you will believe when you read it in the newspapers.

WASHINGTON
If to please the people we offer what we ourselves disapprove, how can we afterwards defend our work? Let us raise a standard to which the wise and honest can repair. The event is in the hands of God.

JEFFERSON
Franklin and Madison were there—and Wilson, Randolph, Ellsworth, Gouverneur Morris, with General Washington as their president. It was an assembly of demi-gods!

MUSIC

(gavel twice)

TWO
Your committee proposes to the convention an additional rule—that nothing spoken in the House be printed or otherwise published or communicated without leave.

JEFFERSON
(close) Madison, you must not do it! It is an abominable precedent to tie up the tongues of the delegates!

MADISON
Yet if a member commits himself publicly, he might afterward suppose that consistency requires him to maintain his ground...

JEFFERSON
(close) The opinions of every delegate must stand before the judgment of the people!

MADISON
...whereas by secret discussion, no man will feel obliged to retain his opinions any longer than he is satisfied by their truth...

JEFFERSON
(close) The people are entitled to the fullest information and knowledge.

MADISON
...It is my belief therefore that this is a prudent rule, justified by the needs of the situation.

JEFFERSON
Madison, listen to me! *(brief pause—then normal)* But Madison could not hear me. I could only write letters that reached him long after the issue was decided. Years later, Madison was to say—

MADISON
It is my opinion that no constitution would ever have been adopted by the convention, if the debates had been public.

JEFFERSON
Perhaps he was right and I was wrong. I cannot be sure. *(pause)* It is for you to judge.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
Thus it was an assembly of silent demi-gods, for no voice came through the closed doors of the convention room. During the long summer months, I imagined the debates on such questions as the powers to be given to the new government, which, in letters even before the convention, *I had discussed with* Madison.

MADISON
I do not willingly disagree with you.

JEFFERSON
(laughs) Then, Madison, let us strive to agree.

MADISON
Perhaps I can convince you. Jefferson, surely among the chief objects of government should be to ensure justice.

JEFFERSON
A good beginning. I agree.

MADISON
But justice for whom?

JEFFERSON
Knowing the subtlety of your reasoning, I hesitate to give the self-evident answer—justice for all the people.

MADISON
There will be rich and poor, creditors and debtors, a monied interest, a manufacturing interest. There will be differences in political, *religious, and other attachments.*

JEFFERSON
So that my hesitation was justified. My self-evident answer is no answer at all.

some precious articles unnoticed, an explicit declaration of rights becomes necessary.

MADISON

Jefferson, to suppose that any kind of government, any paper declaration of rights, will secure liberty or happiness without virtue in the people is a vain hope.

JEFFERSON

I believe, as I think you do, in the principle that the people will have virtue. But, Madison, a bill of rights is what the people are entitled to against every government on earth, and what no just government should refuse, or rest on inference.

MADISON

I am not against a bill or rights, Jefferson. It can be added to the constitution, and will be.

JEFFERSON

It must be, Madison, to serve as a reminder that government is instituted among men for no reason other than to secure these rights.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON

Some men look at constitutions with sanctimonious reverence and deem them too sacred to touch. They ascribe to the men of the preceding age a wisdom more than human, and suppose what they did to be beyond amendment. But I know that laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. No society can make a perpetual constitution, to bind the present with the chains of the past, for the earth belongs to the living and not the dead. Therefore each generation must, for itself, secure the rights that are its inalienable possession. This we did in my time. You who listen—look to your own.

MUSIC

MUSIC

JEFFERSON

The rumor reached such proportions that newspapers throughout the states printed it, and for the first and only time, the convention permitted, unofficially, a public statement.

TWO

We wish to inform the readers of this newspaper that to all enquiries, the members of this convention have uniformly answered—"Though we can not affirmatively tell you what we are doing, we can tell you what we are not doing—We never once thought of a king."

MUSIC

JEFFERSON

In the spring of 1787, I made a tour in the south of the Kingdom of France, talking with the people, observing their condition of life. Again I saw how the absence of liberty depressed them beneath the level of the humblest citizen of the United States. During much of this time, the convention sat in Philadelphia, finally rising in September, its unique task completed.

ONE

We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this constitution for the United States of America.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON

And then I waited, until, in October, there came a letter from Madison.

MADISON

I am enclosing a copy of the work of the convention. *(pause)* You say nothing, Jefferson.

JEFFERSON

I have already seen a copy. Madison, I like the general idea of framing a government which goes on of itself, without needing continual recurrence to state legislatures. I like the power given the legislature to levy taxes, and I approve of the House of Representatives being chosen by the people directly. And I am captivated by the compromise of the opposite claims of the large and small states!

MADISON

Jefferson, your enthusiasm—more than any man's—is gratifying to me. It was a task deemed impossible, with no precedent in history.

JEFFERSON

We can surely boast of having set the world a beautiful example of a government reformed by reason alone, without bloodshed.

MADISON

A government
strengthened to bring order out of chaos—
to escape dissolution.

JEFFERSON

That danger is met. Madison, there was another danger.

MADISON

I have not forgotten. You will not find a dangerous concentration of power in any branch. Each is checked by the others. To strengthen the government, without yielding essential liberty—that is a great achievement.

JEFFERSON

Yet, there is something lacking.

MADISON

The constitution is not wholly as I would have wished it.

JEFFERSON

But this is a fundamental lack. Madison, in some degree, the people have been forgotten. Nowhere do I find an affirmation of human rights.

MADISON

The affirmation is there, Jefferson! It is implied in every part of the constitution.

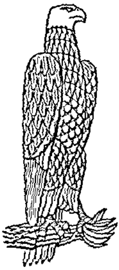
JEFFERSON

Perhaps. But in a constitution that leaves

VII

LIGHT AND LIBERTY

by MILTON GEIGER



JEFFERSON
I had not thought too much about a certain warrior named Ulysses, when the Reverend James Maury taught me Greek and Homer. Ulysses put *his* quill to a bowstring, where I, Thomas Jefferson, put *mine to* parchment. Ulysses of the ringing plains of windy Troy was a man of war while I have counselled reasonable peace. But the long congenialities beyond the grave bring new friends. I know now of a man who followed me in life, a poet named Tennyson, who saw in brave Ulysses more than master of the javelin and the bow. And I like this man Ulysses.

ULYSSES
(some echo) I cannot rest from travel. I am become a name, for always roaming with a hungry heart I am part of all that I have met. How dull it is to pause, to make an end, to rust unburnished, not to shine in use!

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
To shine in use. Yes!–for conduct is to be judged by its utility to man. I respect this man Ulysses–a wanderer in the service of his country–a bringer of new things, to follow knowledge like a sinking star beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

ULYSSES
To strive, to seek, to find–and not to yield!

JEFFERSON
Light and liberty go together. Men will be freer and happier as they come to know more about everything. And to that great end of usefulness; to strive, to seek the light, to find, and not to yield to the Powers of Darkness. I saw mankind headed toward destinies beyond the reach of mortal eye. I saw it when I heard the news from Paris, in 1783– of the balloon. A crowd almost bereft of its renowned Gallic reason had watched a monster taking shape–and presently the monster left the earth bearing two human beings! At last–Man flew!

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
I myself was in France a little later. I wrote to my good friend the Reverend James Madison, President of the College of William and Mary, about efforts to extract hydrogen from pit coal to reduce the cost of ballooning.

JEFFERSON *(continuing)*
(slowly) I wrote: I think a screw propeller I have seen demonstrated on the Seine River might be used to guide and give direction to balloons in flight. I foresee the use of flying machines to traverse countries possessed by an enemy, or to convey intelligence, or to reconnoiter an army. I see their use in commerce; throwing new lights on scientific phenomena of which the atmosphere is the theatre. Perhaps even the discovery of the Pole from which the ice has hitherto stopped adventures–

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
Earlier, because of my researches and some small inventions, I was honored by election as a councillor of that great scientific body in Philadelphia–the American Philosophical Society for Promoting Useful Knowledge, of

Characters:

JEFFERSON

VOICE

ULYSSES

BUFFON

THOMSON

CHIEF LOGAN

JEFFERSON
The great M. de Buffon notwithstanding, the mammoth was not without honor in its own country. It became famous in America. A Philadelphia baker offered a Mammoth Bread for sale. In Washington a Mammoth Eater dispatched 42 eggs in ten minutes. And later the mammoth became the first fossil skeleton ever mounted in America and probably the second in the world. Meanwhile I busied myself with investigations in meteorology, ethnology, botany, astronomy, optics; quarrelled with scientists about seashells found three miles high in South America's Andes mountains; stood in the presence of Space and Time in all its immensity—with David Rittenhouse, Astronomer of the Society.

JEFFERSON *(continuing)*
"Prove all things and hold fast that which is good," the Scriptures told. In the age-long search for truth therefore dwelt divinity. In Science I saw all the portents of Immortality—and saw that it was impossible not to believe that in all these immemorial things, *there was* Design, Cause, Effect. When one looks at the Creation with its order, harmony and beauty and wonderful design, one cannot help perceiving God behind it all. *We did see Him in* that bright springtime of the human mind.

Perhaps, then, it was more than a patriotic bias that involved me further in dispute with the Comte de Buffon; over his disparagement of the New World.

MUSIC

BUFFON
Consider if you will the unbearable degree of moisture in America. The huge mountains, highest in the world, condense all the aerial vapors of the winds. This causes an infinite number of springs and the greatest rivers in the world. Lakes, marshes, rivers, stagnating waters cover immense tracts of land, augmenting the moisture of the land and diminishing its heat, while the transpiration of its endless forests produces immense quantities of moist and noxious exhalations. America has less heat and a greater degree of cold than similar latitudes in Europe. It is so inexorably cold that in Illinois the ground is frozen to a depth of thirty feet.

JEFFERSON
I deplore the readiness of European scientists to credit reports of unskilled travellers who have filled Europe with old wives' tales about America. But more, I deplore all inaccuracy and untruth. May I point out that the wild boar, which may be considered the elephant of Europe, is less than half the size of one of our small cows!

BUFFON
This miserable condition of animals in America is related to the inferior soil, climate and food. All alike shrink under a niggardly sky, an unprolific land, thinly peopled by wandering savages.

JEFFERSON
M. de Buffon now sets upon the human life of America. He draws an afflicting picture of our natives which, for the honor of all human nature, I am glad to believe has no true model.

BUFFON
The Indian of America is a weak automaton, incapable of improving or seconding the intentions of nature, denied the invigorating sentiment of love. His sensations are less acute than the European's and he is timid and cowardly.

JEFFERSON
I have always had a deep feeling for the Indian as for all mankind and I declare with knowledge and not hearsay and bias that he is deeply affectionate, that his friendships are strong and faithful to the uttermost extremity. And to us who have known his fighting qualities at first hand his bravery is without question.

which the wise Dr. Benjamin Franklin was President. I confess, I was a bit diffident, being a new member in a distinguished society, but my zeal to be useful soon prevailed over shyness and I discussed a matter with Charles Thomson, a fellow councillor of the Society. *(pause)*

JEFFERSON
You know, Mr. Thomson, that in answer to some inquiries about America, made by the Marquis de Barbé-Marbois, I wrote a long response—my so-called Notes on Virginia.

THOMSON
Yes, some stormy matters are involved, if I remember.

JEFFERSON
Truths to correct cavil and ignorance and to settle a morass of controversy.

THOMSON
About the mammoth, among other things.

JEFFERSON
Among other very vexing things.

THOMSON
You take issue with Monsieur de Buffon rather daringly, do you not?

JEFFERSON
Daringly perhaps, correctly I trust; and, I dare to hope, with credit to the American Philosophical Society. Might my Notes on Virginia be a suitable offering to the Society?

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
I trembled for the answer to that question, for within the framework of those Notes on Virginia—as well as outside it—I had challenged the greatest minds in the world of natural science, including the great George Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon. He was one of the Gods of Science I contended against! But what patriot could stand idly by and hear such uninformed canards against the very climate and soil and people of America, even from the great Buffon! In the interest of the New World, and of truth and of the true scientific spirit which knows no boundaries of geography, I rose in defense of the unpolitical weather, the non-partisan fauna the disenfranchised fossils of America—like the *mammoth! Even against Buffon!*

MUSIC

BUFFON
(a detachment more infuriating than any scorn or irony) A large fossil animal found in America is assumed to be the remains of a mammoth. This is not a mammoth, simply because it cannot be a mammoth. No beast of such proportions could have grown on the inhospitable soil and climate of America. The mammoth is an absurdity, entirely dismissible. I dismiss it. It is, if anything, an elephant or a hippopotamus.

JEFFERSON
M. de Buffon in France is in error. The large tusks, frame and teeth of the fossil prove certainly that the creature was not a hippopotamus!

BUFFON
An elephant, then, is the last alternative.

JEFFERSON
The grinders are five times larger than any elephant's and are square, with blunt points—entirely unlike the elephant's. Moreover, no elephant remains have ever been found in America. No cautious scientific philosophy can suppose America as a habitat of elephants—which range thirty degrees on each side of the equator, only.

BUFFON
It is an elephant.

JEFFERSON
It is established that the mammoth, on the other hand, did range north of the 36th latitude, probably as far north as the Pole itself. How can the distinguished M. de Buffon confuse this largest of terrestrial beings with the elephant?

BUFFON
Clearly, an elephant.

MUSIC

tion and distillation generally, to the making of bread, butter, cheese, soap, to the incubation of eggs—so as to make the chemistry of these subjects intelligible to our good housewives.

BUFFON
Which is not at all what I meant but let it go—let it go.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
While in Paris I got someone to build one of my pendulum devices for setting the beat for music. I found, interestingly enough, that it vibrated 52 times for Largo, 60 for Adagio, 70 for Andante, 95 for Allegro, and 135 for Presto. We measured Haydn and Mozart, I at the violin—my daughter Patsy at the harpsichord.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
In 1789, on leave from my mission in France, I came home to America. I was home at last, resting at my beloved Monticello. But not for long.

ULYSSES
(echo) How dull it is to pause, to make an end, to rust unburnished, not to shine in use.

JEFFERSON
President Washington had asked me to be his Secretary of State—and I became Secretary of State. Still, I would not forfeit my science, and my zeal to promote the general good by an interchange of useful things. One such thing I presented for the consideration of my friend, Charles Thomson, my fellow councillor in the American Philosophical Society for Promoting Useful Knowledge — of which I later became President.

JEFFERSON
Look at this diagram, Mr. Thomson.

THOMSON
Neatly executed, Mr. Jefferson. What is it?

JEFFERSON
(ruefully) If I am as apt an inventor as I am a draughtsman, then I am an apt farmer!

THOMSON
Would it be, perhaps, the moldboard of a plough?

JEFFERSON
(elated) The moldboard of a plough indeed it is, thank you, Mr. Thomson, thank you!

THOMSON
A rather curious pattern, isn't it?

JEFFERSON
My own invention. Consider: what is the principle and purpose of the moldboard? To receive the sod after the ploughshare has cut into it, to lift up the sod, and reverse it.

THOMSON
Yes?

JEFFERSON
Therefore the fore end of the really correctly designed moldboard should be horizontal to enter the sod and the rear end vertical to throw it over—the intermediate surface changing gradually from the horizontal to the perpendicular in a continuous curve.

THOMSON
It seems an admirable thing—on paper.

JEFFERSON
It is new in all the long annals of the plough and the ploughman. And every ploughman may copy my plough as his own. He who receives an idea from me receives instruction himself without lessening mine, as he who lights a taper at mine receives light without darkening me.

THOMSON
Well enough—but will the moldboard work?

JEFFERSON
I shall try it myself at Monticello.

THOMSON
A busy farmer and Secretary of State together?

JEFFERSON
I shall not always be Secretary of State.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
No, not always Secretary of State. After that it was the Vice-Presidency of the United States

BUFFON

He is sluggish of mind, devoid of the amenities *of speech and destitute of wit or eloquence.*

JEFFERSON

M. de Buffon and his scientific contemporaries, who have disdained to set foot in America yet speak weightily on it, have not heard of Logan, the great Mingo chieftain. Chief Logan's family was destroyed—his tribe defeated, and, forced to sue for peace, Logan would not attend the peace conference but sent by messenger this famous speech which ranks with anything Demosthenes ever spoke, and for itself speaks *for the dignity of all mankind.*

MUSIC

LOGAN

I appeal to any white man to say if he ever entered Logan's cabin hungry and he gave him not to eat. If ever he came cold and naked and Logan clothed him not. I have even thought to have lived with you but for the injuries from one of your number who last spring in cold blood and unprovoked, murdered all the relations of Logan, not even sparing my women and children. Today there runs not a drop of my blood in the veins of any living creature. This called on me for revenge. I have killed many. For my country I now rejoice in peace. But do not harbor a thought that mine is the joy of fear. Logan has never felt fear. He will not turn on his heel to save his life. Who is there to mourn for Logan? Not one.

JEFFERSON

Is this fear in our American Indian, M. de Buffon? Poverty of sentiment or eloquence? Is it less testimony to human nobility than you will discover anywhere in all of Europe? Is this the speech of timid spirits and torpid minds? I think perhaps M. de Buffon has cherished error, while lending her, for a moment, his vivid imagination and bewitching language. *(pause)* Let me reply for humanity, and the diverse peoples who tenant this earth—that greatness does not cast the laurel down upon any chosen ones; no nation or environment has superior claim to the qualities of greatness; and learning knows no barrier of creed or tongue or color. For America let me reply that the name of George Washington will assume its just station among the most celebrated worthies of the world. Our great David Rittenhouse is second to no astronomer living, and Europe itself has witnessed with delight and respect the achievements of our Dr. Franklin.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON

Later, when Minister to France, I had the good fortune to meet M. de Buffon. I was introduced, perhaps gingerly, as that American who, in certain Notes on Virginia, had combatted his opinions. He was most tolerant, and instead of entering into argument with me, presented me with his latest book in return for mine.

BUFFON

Keep this, Mr. Jefferson and read it. When you shall have read it, you will be perfectly satisfied that I am right.

JEFFERSON

I shall read your book avidly, sir, for its many accuracies. America needs your science, for science, I think, is more important in a republican government than in any other. The work of your Lavoisier in chemistry for example.

BUFFON

Chemistry! Naught but a kind of cookery.

JEFFERSON

Indeed, sir? I consider chemistry big with future discoveries for the utility and safety of the human race.

BUFFON

I place the toils of the laboratory on a footing with the kitchen.

JEFFERSON

As well you might, sir! The chemists have not been attentive enough to domestic objects, to malting, brewing, making cider, to fermenta-

tion and distillation generally, to the making of bread, butter, cheese, soap, to the incubation of eggs—so as to make the chemistry of these subjects intelligible to our good housewives.

BUFFON
Which is not at all what I meant but let it go—let it go.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
While in Paris I got someone to build one of my pendulum devices for setting the beat for music. I found, interestingly enough, that it vibrated 52 times for Largo, 60 for Adagio, 70 for Andante, 95 for Allegro, and 135 for Presto. We measured Haydn and Mozart, I at the violin —my daughter Patsy at the harpsichord.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
In 1789, on leave from my mission in France, I came home to America. I was home at last, resting at my beloved Monticello. But not for long.

ULYSSES
(echo) How dull it is to pause, to make an end, to rust unburnished, not to shine in use.

JEFFERSON
President Washington had asked me to be his Secretary of State—and I became Secretary of State. Still, I would not forfeit my science, and my zeal to promote the general good by an interchange of useful things. One such thing I presented for the consideration of my friend, Charles Thomson, my fellow councillor in the American Philosophical Society for Promoting Useful Knowledge — of which I later became President.

JEFFERSON
Look at this diagram, Mr. Thomson.

THOMSON
Neatly executed, Mr. Jefferson. What is it?

JEFFERSON
(ruefully) If I am as apt an inventor as I am a draughtsman, then I am an apt farmer!

THOMSON
Would it be, perhaps, the moldboard of a plough?

JEFFERSON
(elated) The moldboard of a plough indeed it is, thank you, Mr. Thomson, thank you!

THOMSON
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MUSIC

JEFFERSON
No, not always Secretary of State. After that it was the Vice-Presidency of the United States

that summoned me to service and I answered. In 1796 a monster of sheer delight issued from the ancient caverns of Virginia, stark and aged into stony bone—as pre-eminent over the lion in size as the mammoth over the elephant. I named the new discovery "Megálonyx"—"Great Claw"—and the judgment of science would one day classify my discovery as "Megalonyx Jeffersoni." Later and better paleontologists identified the creature differently, but I have no embarrassment; I had the joy of discovery. Yes, nature intended me for the tranquil pursuits of science by rendering them my supreme delight. But the enormities of the times in which I lived forced me to take a part in resisting them and to commit myself on the boisterous ocean of political passions. Ironic that my science brought me not tranquillity, but tumult and opprobrium. The jaws of long-dead megalonyx mocked me; the tusks of prehistoric mammoth were brandished—to keep me from the Presidency of the United States of America!

MUSIC

VOICE
This Thomas Jefferson is a philosopher—that is to say, a scientist! Yes, a scientist—bookish, dangerous, politically unreliable and an enemy of religion!

MUSIC

VOICE
Wretched indeed is our country if she is to be enlightened by these "scientists" whose industry is equalled by nothing but their vanity. Whose pursuits are impeded by no danger, no difficulty, no law, human or divine. And to what end? To quench the thirst for immortality and to degrade men from the rank of the angels!

JEFFERSON
Yet the Scriptures themselves say, "Prove all things and hold fast that which is good."

VOICE
A philosopher makes the worst politician!

JEFFERSON
Yet I think our countrymen are too enlightened to believe that ignorance is the best qualification for their service.

VOICE
Doubtless, as the philosophers claim, sunbeams may be extracted from cucumbers, but the process is tedious! *(laughter)*

A few years ago these philosopher-scientists like Mr. Thomas Jefferson claimed it was groveling to travel either by land or water. The *scientific* mode was to go by air! *(laughter)* If it was intended that men should fly through the air why were they not made with feathers and wings? *(laughter)* The plough also has undergone a thorough change on mathematical principles. And we have at least one philosopher in the country who has forsooth taken accurate measure of the mammoth's bones, made surprising discoveries in the doctrine of vibrating pendulums and astonished the world with the precise gauge and dimensions of all the aboriginals in America! Surely no sensible man will go to the polls to vote for this *Mammoth* infidel—*(laughter mixed with angry 'No, No's)*

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
Infidel they called me. Yet, in God we live and move and have our being. St. Paul said that. St. Paul the astronomer; the scientist. No matter to those who called me godless that the Reverend James Madison of William and Mary believed in me; that the Reverend Ezra Stiles of Yale saw worth in me; that the Reverend Joseph Willard of Harvard sided with me and St. Paul in seeing the Divine Hand in the swing and orbit of the planets and the universal systems. But light and liberty go together. *(music: inspiring now)* The majority of Freemen bathed in that light of freedom saw no fault in nature or in nature's God and those who sought the fruits of nature.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON

Friends and fellow citizens: called upon to undertake the duties of the first executive office of our country, I avail myself of the presence of that portion of my fellow citizens which is here assembled, to express my grateful thanks for the favor with which they have been pleased to look toward me, to declare a sincere consciousness that the task is above my talents and that I approach it with those anxious and awful presentiments which the greatness of the charge and the weakness of my powers so justly inspire. A rising nation spread over a wide and fruitful land, traversing all the seas with the rich productions of their industry, engaged in commerce, advancing rapidly to destinies beyond the reach of mortal eye.

When I contemplate these transcendent objects and see the honor, the happiness, and the hopes of this beloved country—

MUSIC

JEFFERSON

We have spent the prime of our lives in procuring to our young men the precious blessing of liberty. Let them spend theirs in showing that it is the great parent of science and of virtue; and that a nation will be great in both always in proportion as it is free.

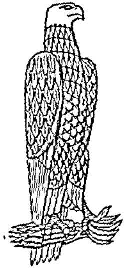
MUSIC

VIII

THE RETURN OF A PATRIOT

by MILTON GEIGER

with narration by DUMAS MALONE



NARRATOR

The year 1789 was fateful in human history. In America, George Washington became the first President of the United States under the Constitution. In France a revolution began which was still relatively orderly but was destined to shake the world. The American minister to that country, Thomas Jefferson, came home on leave in the autumn. In the Old World he had drunk at the fount of ancient culture to his delight, and he had been able to be a personally disinterested philosopher and everybody's friend. This role suited his tastes admirably, and to it he expected to return. Then, after a bit, he expected to retire from all the vexations of public office and to live out his life usefully but quietly on his own lands and among his beloved books. When he set out from Paris he did not know that President Washington wanted him as his first assistant in the labors and vast responsibilities of the new national government. The President himself had had to sacrifice private preference to public duty when he regretfully left Mount Vernon for the temporary capital in New York; and the success of the Republic depended on the willingness of other leaders of the purest patriotism to do likewise. Had Thomas Jefferson had more personal ambition and less sensitiveness of spirit, the choice that he had to make when he came home would have been less difficult; but high-minded men have often faced the same essential problem when answering calls to public service. Thus a personal episode in one man's life becomes a parable for his time and all others.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON

On November 23rd, 1789 we disembarked at Norfolk, Virginia – my daughters Patsy and Polly, and I – and, being greeted by the Mayor, I was presented with what amounted to a *fait accompli*. I was welcomed as the new Secretary of State of the United States! I accepted the *welcome* as graciously and non-committally as I might, not having officially heard of the appointment, and gravely doubting that I should ever accept it.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON

A month later – the day before Christmas Eve – our carriage was winding up the long road that climbed to Monticello. Polly, then eleven, was asleep; Patsy was much, much awake! *(carriage on dirt road...trotting horses)*

PATSY

I'm so excited, papa! Aren't you excited?

JEFFERSON

Very much.

PATSY

But you don't *look* excited!

JEFFERSON

My excitement is middle-aged and yours is seventeen, and mine is deeply rooted. I know

PATSY

Must you go back to France – or go to New York?

Characters:

JEFFERSON

PATSY JEFFERSON

DR. GILMER

MONROE

MADISON

MARTHA JEFFERSON

NARRATOR

GILMER
If we may stand, sir. Mr. Jefferson, at an early period of your life and a very critical era of public affairs, we elected you our representative in the House of Burgesses. The controversy in which we were about to embark called for the exertions of those citizens who were most distinguished for their wisdom, integrity and patriotism. In that station, sir, your virtues and talents became known in your country.

JEFFERSON
Let them always, for what they are, remain the property of my country.

GILMER
We should wound our feelings if we detailed the acts of your public life of which we highly approve. We cannot however decline assuring you that we have been most happy to observe the strong attachment you have always shown the rights of all mankind and those institutions best calculated to preserve them. *(the crux)* Sir–America has still occasion for your services. In the interest of our country and in the high respect we hold for your merit, we unite with the general voice that you enter into her highest councils.

JEFFERSON
But, gentlemen–

GILMER
We refer of course
to President Washington's invitation for you to become his first Secretary of State under the new Constitution.

JEFFERSON
Dr. Gilmer, Colonel Monroe, I am just home after a long absence abroad. In all candor, I have not yet given thought to public office in America.

GILMER
(kindly) We know your love of study and retirement must strongly solicit you to avoid the glare, confusion, and exasperation to which public stations expose men.

MONROE
We know, too, that once you surrender again your private life, you may be long exposed to the impertinence of a silly world that makes public office thankless sometimes, and painful to sincere and modest men.

JEFFERSON
Painful perhaps, Colonel Monroe. But thankless? I have been thanked to the foundations of my being today and it is I who must be humbly grateful.

GILMER
Thank us best by putting us hopelessly in your debt: tell President Washington that you accept the office of Secretary of State.

JEFFERSON
(moved but troubled) I must think.

MUSIC

(quill pen scratching)

JEFFERSON
(softly) Let us then, my dear friends, forever bow down to the general reason of society. We are–

MUSIC

PATSY
Oh, dear!

JEFFERSON
Does the scratch of my pen disturb you, Patsy?

PATSY
It's the cold. It puts the strings out of tune.

JEFFERSON
Come here a moment and read what I have edited–now that the clumsy weather has edited Clementi.

PATSY
"Does the scratch of my pen disturb you, Patsy!" That was a scold, wasn't it?

JEFFERSON
The reproof is for manufacturers of noisy pen-quills from over-strident geese. *(rustle of parchment)* Here. My reply to Dr. Gilmer and James Monroe.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON

I can be happier in France than anywhere else, except in the privacy of home. I find my best happiness in the love of my family and the society of my neighbors; in my affection for every bud that opens and every breath that blows around me, while I owe account to myself alone, of all my hours and actions—all my solitary thoughts—and memories.

PATSY

Papa, look—be excited! We're home!

JEFFERSON

(out of a reverie) Yes, Patsy?

PATSY

Look, papa—in the road!

JEFFERSON

Why it's Jupiter. And there are Sukey and Ursula.

PATSY

And King George!

JEFFERSON

It's good to see our people again.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON

(quietly, with feeling) Some say that my slaves unhitched the horses and pulled our carriage to the last ridge of the mountain. My own memory is clouded from the moisture in my eyes that day. I do remember that they carried me into the house that I had built, some weeping, some laughing, some kissing my hands for all my protest. I loved them and they called me master though I did not like to be the master of slaves or anybody else.

NARRATOR

Thomas Jefferson would seldom speak of such a deeply emotional thing as this; he was a restrained man who talked least about the per- [illegible] that moved him most. He loved [illegible] would [illegible] people loved *him*—that he was a good master under a system he deplored but could not remedy. One other thing he would never have hinted at: *and that was that this home of his was haunted* by the ghost of the person he had loved the most. Seven years before, in this place, he had shared with his sister and sister-in-law the task of nursing his wife in her last illness. For weeks afterwards he was in a stupor of mind which, as he said, rendered him "as dead to the world as she was whose loss occasioned it." Then, for once, he had wanted to get away from Monticello. That was one reason he was so glad to go to France, and, even now, he may have wished that he could again put the ocean between him and the scene of his most poignant experience.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON

And a very merry Christmas to *you,* Dr. Gilmer; Colonel Monroe!

GILMER

May we also present our sincere congratulations on your return to your native country, sir.

MONROE

As one of your new neighbors of Albemarle County, I feel honored to speak for very many of your old neighbors who could not be here.

JEFFERSON

In your persons, they are all here and welcome. I have an excellent cognac which I thought to ship ahead of me from France and *for* good neighbors.

GILMER

A time for that to be sure, Mr. Jefferson. But a time for tribute too, sir.

MONROE

And now.

GILMER

We should do violence to our feelings if we did not here and now offer you a testimonial of our esteem.

JEFFERSON

(embarrassed but vaguely pleased) Do—do sit down, gentlemen?

GILMER
If we may stand, sir. Mr. Jefferson, at an early period of your life and a very critical era of public affairs, we elected you our representative in the House of Burgesses. The controversy in which we were about to embark called for the exertions of those citizens who were most distinguished for their wisdom, integrity and patriotism. In that station, sir, your virtues and talents became known in your country.

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MUSIC

(quill pen scratching)

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MUSIC

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MUSIC

JEFFERSON
I watched Patsy—seventeen—fresh—tender. I watched and saw no shadow in her eyes, no furrow of her brow. And I rejoiced in my writing and in the understanding of my daughter, the living token of her mother, that my words spelled no puzzle to her—until almost the very end.

PATSY
"Wherever I may be stationed, it will be my delight to—" Does that mean you're going to accept General Washington's appointment?

JEFFERSON
(gingerly) It does not quite say that, does it?

PATSY
It says wherever you may be stationed.

JEFFERSON
It does not accept any particular station.

PATSY
It seems a quibble to me.

JEFFERSON
It makes allowance for a possible change of heart—no more. It accepts nothing now.

PATSY
Will you accept the appointment some time, then?

JEFFERSON
I do not know. This is where I really want to be. This is the home of my heart and of my own hand. You and Polly were born here; this is where I want to live my days in peace and to die in peace. *(pause)* This is where I brought your mother.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
It snowed desperately the night I brought her home.

PATSY
I know.

JEFFERSON
Desperately. Our carriage was delayed by the snow. We arrived here very late. I didn't want to wake the household. We spent the night in one of the out-buildings.

JEFFERSON
(far far away) It snowed desperately—but a fire burned kindly in our honeymoon house.

JEFFERSON
(back with us again) This is Home. This is peace and refuge from the desperation without. I dread public disapproval and criticism above all things. Here, I am rebuked for my failures only by the falling bud or the sick oak tree. I belong here, dear Patsy. And next after this, I love France—for I kept hidden and worked in silence and obscurity there.

(heavy iron knocker on heavy door)

JEFFERSON
That will be Mr. James Monroe and Dr. Gilmer for their answer.

PATSY
What will you tell them?

JEFFERSON
What I have written.
(repeat knock)

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
(louder as music dies) Let us then my dear friends forever bow down to the general reason of society. We are safe in that, even in its deviations, for it soon returns again to the right way. These lessons we have learned together. We have prospered in their practice, and your approval of my attachment to the general rights of mankind assures me we are still together in its kindred sentiments. Wherever I may be stationed, it will be my delight to see, in the general tide of happiness, that yours too flows on in just place and measure. That it may flow through all Time, gathering strength as it goes, and spreading the happy influence of Reason and Liberty over the face of the earth, is my fervent prayer to heaven.

GILMER
Is there an answer for President Washington in this, Mr. Jefferson?

JEFFERSON
I have written the President that it is not for any individual to choose his post. The President is to marshal us as may be best for the public good.

GILMER
The President is far too wise to have the decision thrust upon him. He has remarked that the appointee must make his own decision.

JEFFERSON
(troubled) So he must indeed—
and so I shall. But it takes time, debate. I still must consider.

MUSIC

NARRATOR
Thomas Jefferson, the First Citizen of Albemarle, did not yet know whither duty would lead him. But in the region of his birth, this traveller, just returned from a continent in the first throes of revolt against ancient oppression, renewed his allegiance to the holy cause of freedom, while announcing his undying faith in the sufficiency of human reason, and his reliance on the will of the majority. Thomas Jefferson wrote more famous state papers but never one that better summed up the philosophy by which his feet were guided. Though he did not perceive it yet, there was guidance for him here and now in his own words. If he had resolved forever to "bow down to the general reason of society," he might have reflected that this was voiced by George Washington, the unanimously elected and deeply revered head of the Republic, who was so politely urging him to assume high office. The "will of the majority" also seemed to point in the same direction. If there was not "universal anxiety" that he accept this post, as somebody said, all his friends seemed determined to get him into the new government. Among the most cherished of these was James Madison—Father of the Constitution if anybody was.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
My answer is the same, Mr. Madison, as it was to your letter to me when I was still in France. I wrote you in reply to your soundings about my taking office in America.

MADISON
I remember, of course.

JEFFERSON
I told you that when I quit my present office of Minister to France I would accept no other. One of its main advantages is that I can do its duties unseen by those for whom I do them.

MADISON
You have had an ocean voyage between and time to change your mind.

JEFFERSON
My decision remains the same.

MADISON
But here, sir, is an opportunity for high service to which people like you are bound by tradition and training.

JEFFERSON
In all sincerity, I feel that my debt of service to my country has been faithfully paid. I have been in public service some twenty years, to the deep and dangerous neglect of my own affairs. No positive engagement binds me to further service. I am pledged by no act nor have I pledged my country in any enterprise that I should see it through. I have not committed my friends.

MADISON
Even your enemies,
few as they are, do not
pretend this.

JEFFERSON
I stand clear then
of further public responsibility
on all points.

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

obligation with you [illegible]

JEFFERSON
Age, experience and reflection have set as high a value on personal tranquillity.
MADISON
You will not reconsider?
JEFFERSON
I have thought deeply on it.
MADISON
Duty is out of the question?
JEFFERSON
It is not out of the question if I could but go on in a strict but silent performance of my duty as I did in France—avoiding all notice and keeping my name out of the newspapers. Sir, believe me, I find the pain of a little censure, even when it is unfounded, far more acute than the pleasure of praise.
MADISON
I confess, the Secretaryship of State would spell the ruin of all your privacy.
JEFFERSON
I should be a blind Baldur of mythology, in full harsh view of the world, and a target for every mischievous mistletoe flung at me to strike me lifeless.
MADISON
A Baldur perhaps; a target, surely. But blind? No, sir! The President does not select his advisers from a squinting band of moles and bats.
JEFFERSON
(with some humor) Thank you, Mr. Madison.
MADISON
But you will decline the appointment.
JEFFERSON
But let it be courteously and gratefully—to the President himself—in my own way.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
Still, I waited, still I deferred and temporized and hoped the President would make the decision that it rent my soul to make. Gratefully I turned to the marriage of Patsy for a moment of felicity and domesticity to hold the affairs of earth at bay a while longer. Patsy's marriage was an important domestic event wholly unrelated to public affairs; I spoke to Patsy about her marriage; she listened sweetly and attentively. And as I spoke I had an image of another bride coming home to Monticello, long ago, in snow and darkness to a kindly hearth.
(continues)
Sweetness of temper, affection to a husband and attention to his interests: these, dear Patsy, are the duties of a wife; these form the foundation of domestic felicity and lasting happiness. The charms of beauty and the brilliancy of wit, though they may captivate in the mistress, will not long delight in the wife. Play something for me now.
PATSY
Yes, father.
JEFFERSON
Something gentle.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
Patsy played for a bit, while I walked the rooms I had erected to surround our lives and shelter them. A nation and its great first President stood outside the walls and asked for a decision. But a nation, too, of peering eyes and pointing fingers and voices harsh with controversy, contradictions, blame — when I sought rest, my quiet studies, home, memory.
(pacing slowly)
JEFFERSON
Decide, the Nation told me. Serve, said the President. *(low)* Serve? Decide—how? *(walks again)* Secretary of State. The United States of America. *(stops)* What would Martha have counselled? What would she say?

MUSIC

MARTHA
(from a distance) Well, now, there was Euripides if I remember rightly.
JEFFERSON
(not answering her but his mind) Euripides?

MARTHA
(lightly) Oh, you were a very serious young man. You copied out one of his quotations once.

JEFFERSON
Euripides?

MARTHA
So you told me.

JEFFERSON
I remember now.

MARTHA
How did it go?

JEFFERSON
"To be of the noble born gives a peculiar distinction clearly marked among men. The noble name increases in lustre in those who are worthy."

MARTHA
Remember.

JEFFERSON
I remember.

MARTHA
Oh, you were a serious young man!

JEFFERSON
But very young with young illusion.

MARTHA
"Be worthy of your privileges," you always said.

JEFFERSON
True, but that too was a youthful fancy.

MARTHA
And what was *I* if not a fancy of your youth?

JEFFERSON
(gently) True.

MARTHA
You said other things. You said, "There is a natural aristocracy of talent and virtue."

JEFFERSON
(low) Rather than man's aristocracy of wealth and birth.

MARTHA
Yes. And the obligation of talent and virtue is to serve.

JEFFERSON
But I have served and would gladly serve again if I could do so in tranquillity!

MARTHA
Years ago when I was alive we went through this.

JEFFERSON
Williamsburg?

MARTHA
Yes.

JEFFERSON
I remember. The Virginia Legislature, it was then.

MARTHA
You didn't want to go. I was ill; you feared to leave me.

JEFFERSON
Yes.

MARTHA
You went.

JEFFERSON
(pause) Yes.

MARTHA
Although I was your wife, I was only one person and the new nation was many. And the Youth is father of the man; and the Youth of *you* had copied ringing phrases on nobility and duty.

JEFFERSON
(torn) Return to public controversy and strife; perhaps to die in the traces, far from home and the very graves of all my loved ones? For if I take this critical step I must walk and walk and walk until the blood falters at last and mortal things are done with.

MARTHA
The noble name increases in lustre in those who are worthy.

JEFFERSON
Go to New York? To die at last in squalor of soul?

MARTHA
No. To serve to the last in honor and the gratitude of free men.

JEFFERSON
The desperate tumult without, the peace within!
MARTHA
Nevertheless.
JEFFERSON
Nevertheless.
MARTHA
(softly) It snowed desperately the night you brought me here.
JEFFERSON
(smiling) Desperately.
MARTHA
The refuge was sweeter because of the tumult without.
JEFFERSON
(pause: then softly) Yes.
MARTHA
Goodnight. *(fading)* Goodnight.
JEFFERSON
Yes!

MUSIC

NARRATOR
This was not the first time that this high-minded and excessively sensitive man had faced a choice between private preference and public duty, and it was not to be the last time. In France, far from the public that he served, he would have been much safer from the public criticism and controversy that he dreaded; and, if he had returned to his post there, he might have retired much sooner than he actually did. He might never have become a national party leader, a President of the United States. He *might have avoided the strife and vilification* of those later years, which far surpassed his worst forebodings. Often he wanted to turn back and sometimes he tried to. But there could be no real escape for one who linked with the individualism of his philosophy a high sense of personal responsibility for the public good. The Republic was not always grateful, as the equally sensitive George Washington also found out to his sorrow. But Thomas Jefferson *left it more than a body of* elevated ideas and fine phrases; he left it the record of a lifetime of devoted public service. Perhaps this is his finest legacy to his countrymen.

MUSIC

(steps sounding clearly and firmly, slow down and stop)
JEFFERSON
I am ready to serve—Mr. President.

MUSIC

IX

THE DANGER OF FREEDOM

by MORTON WISHENGRAD

Characters:

JEFFERSON

JOHN ADAMS

GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

VOICE ONE

VOICE TWO

WOMAN

MAN ONE

MAN TWO

SINGER



SINGER
What shall I sing you,
O, what shall I sing you?
(sings softly during the following)
VOICE
"This story is true in a way precisely because it is false in a way." Certain of these events have been imagined, but the words of Thomas Jefferson are in the *spirit* in which he spoke, and his spirit is for now.
SINGER
Shall I sing you,
Shall I sing you,
That there is any truth *without* its lie?
Oh no, oh no, I sing you oh-no!
For folly must endure, endure
Lest reason die.

MUSIC

SINGER
And Thomas Jefferson said,
And Thomas Jefferson said:
JEFFERSON
"*If* there be any among us who would wish to dissolve *this* Union or to change its republican form, let *them* stand undisturbed as monuments of the safety with which error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it."

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
In the year 1776 a confederation of British subjects made an exodus out of the bondage of monarchy and in an act of rebellion declared themselves citizens of an American republic. But the idea of coercion refused to die.

In the year 1801 Mr. John Adams was defeated for re-election as President of the United States. But no president was elected in his place. For a deadlock existed between Mr. Aaron Burr and myself, and the choice of a new president rested with the House of Representatives.
(sound of carriage wheels)
MORRIS
Mr. Jefferson—
one moment, please.
JEFFERSON
Mr. Gouverneur Morris.
MORRIS
(laughs) The accent you impart to my name reminds me that I am a Federalist and that you are a bloody Republican. My dear Jefferson, let me be entirely candid with you.
JEFFERSON
You always are, Mr. Morris.
MORRIS
I have no use for your Frenchified politics. I am convinced that every single one of you Jacobins is in communication with Paris, that immense reservoir and cesspool of all immorality and corruption.
JEFFERSON
You are a most eloquent man.
MORRIS
Ah, you perceive it, do you! *(laughs)* What a pity you put so much faith in the rabble. Jefferson, you have sold us out—betrayed the American aristocracy. Ah, but I must hasten *to the* point.

JEFFERSON
I am a patient man.

MORRIS
(laughs) Against myself, you delight me. *(soberly)* Very well—the point. There is a deadlock. That deadlock could be easily broken in your favor.

JEFFERSON
You don't like my politics, Morris. Why in my favor?

MORRIS
I despise Aaron Burr. He is ambitious for himself. You are ambitious for your ideas. The country can survive your ideas—but Mr. Aaron Burr's dreams of aggrandizement, not quite so easily. There is a vote available, Jefferson, a vote to end the deadlock.

JEFFERSON
And it has its price.

MORRIS
Not a high price for the Presidency. When you sit in the Executive Mansion, keep these long delicate fingers of yours off the Alien and Naturalization Laws.

JEFFERSON
They are bad laws.

MORRIS
Oh, rather nasty ones—but useful. All immigrants are Irish rebels and French incendiaries who vote Republican. Our little law makes it necessary for them to cool their heels for fourteen years before they can be eligible for citizenship. And in fourteen years much can happen.

JEFFERSON
Including an American monarchy.

MORRIS
Why not?
You see I am a snob
with no faith whatsoever in your populace:
I am not alone, Jefferson.

JEFFERSON
I believe you.

MORRIS
I have quoted the price. Does Mr. Jefferson gain the Presidency?

JEFFERSON
You're a cynical man.

MORRIS
And a rather charming one. Admit it. Well, Jefferson?

JEFFERSON
You must know my answer.

MORRIS
Tell me.

JEFFERSON
It is not merely the immigrant you would repel, but the new ideas he brings; the ideas which have caused him to quit the staleness and the repression of Europe for the open promise that is America. Your repression has hounded the French philosopher Volney from these shores, it is now engaged in harrying Dr. Joseph Priestley and scientists like him. They thought to find a haven and a refuge here—you would make it a prison until they are forced to flee. I am against you, Mr. Morris.

MORRIS
It does not surprise me.

JEFFERSON
The issue is more than republican principles; the issue is the freedom of intelligence. The present despots of the earth are inculcating the cowardly doctrine that the human mind is incapable of further advances. Their friends in this country are re-echoing it, and are urging us to look backward to feudal barbarisms, not forward to expanding knowledge. Thank Heaven the American mind is already too much opened to listen to these impostures. But, sir, if it were necessary, in order to preserve freedom of thought and expression, every spirit should be ready for martyrdom—for as long as we may think as we will, and speak as we think, the condition of man will proceed in improvement.

MORRIS
Charming. *(laughs)*
JEFFERSON
I am pleased I amuse you.
MORRIS
I was thinking of Alexander Hamilton. *(guffaws)* What a choice for Hamilton and me! Aaron Burr or Thomas Jefferson. *(laughs)* Will this country ever recover from it?

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
In the year 1801 Mr. Gouverneur Morris laughed, but he laughed almost alone. For there was little mirth in the capital of Washington. It was a city of anxious men, crowded with passion. By day and by night the Congress sat in unbroken deadlock. The wind blew from the north and the wind blew cold, but there was a heat of anger, and that anger seethed like a cauldron until few men could sleep by its bubbling sound. And restlessly those who accounted themselves my friends came to my lodgings to give me counsel.
MAN
Margaret, will you be good enough to explain to Mr. Jefferson why we have called.
WOMAN
Sir, we are a committee
of your friends come to ask you to attend
Church service with us.
JEFFERSON
It is most gracious of you, Madam.
WOMAN
You will enjoy the singing, sir, and accept my assurance that our minister preaches a most eloquent sermon.
JEFFERSON
You are both very kind. I see no reason why I should not attend.
MAN
I would put it more positively, Mr. Jefferson, there are the most compelling reasons why you should in fact attend.
JEFFERSON
To worship God, and if only for a few hours to find a little peace.
MAN
Yes, of course. But on this particular Sabbath a more influential reason.
JEFFERSON
A political reason, sir?
MAN
Yes, Mr. Jefferson.
JEFFERSON
Please go on.
MAN
There is no question in the mind of any rational person that Thomas Jefferson and not Aaron Burr is the preference of a majority of the voters. And yet thanks to the curious operation of the election law, in the balloting by states there is a deadlock. But now only a slight change can break it in your favor, Mr. Jefferson.
JEFFERSON
Now it becomes clearer: you wish me to attend services in order to influence God to cast his vote for me.
MAN
An excellent witticism! But to be serious, sir. The vote of one more state delegation gives you the election. There is a representative from my own state who refuses to vote for Thomas Jefferson because he considers you to be an agnostic, an infidel, or worse.
WOMAN
Your friends know this is a falsehood, sir. And by attending church with us this coming Sunday, you will convince our representative of his error.
MAN
And gain a crucial, deciding vote.
WOMAN
Mr. Jefferson, may we call for you on Sunday?
JEFFERSON
I shall be happy to accompany you.

MAN
Excellent.
JEFFERSON
Three Sundays from today.
MAN
Forgive me, sir, perhaps you don't understand what we are driving at.
JEFFERSON
I understand quite well.
MAN
Congress is voting this week—not three Sundays from this week.
JEFFERSON
I will not make a political instrument of religion.
WOMAN
A noble sentiment, Mr. Jefferson, which does you credit. But—
JEFFERSON
A man's conscience cannot be the captive of legislators or governments or the conventions of bigotry. There are rights which it is useless to surrender to governments and to legislatures and which governments and legislatures are always found to invade. The right of thinking, of publishing our thoughts by speaking and writing, the right of free intellectual commerce. What is the entire issue of this election if not this?
MAN
We live in a hard, practical world, Mr. Jefferson, and you are in a difficult situation from which your friends wish to extricate you.
JEFFERSON
Then I must answer that nothing is so mistaken as the supposition that we can extricate ourselves from a difficulty by deceit or chicanery. To attend your church service for political reasons is chicanery, and a lie.
WOMAN
A lie for which God will surely forgive you.
JEFFERSON
But would my own grandchildren forgive me? I set the oldest on my knee and I say to him—I say it often that he may not forget—I say: "My child, if you tell a lie once, you will find it easier to tell a lie a second time, and soon you will be telling lies without realizing it, and truths without the world believing you."
WOMAN
Shall I tell you what I think, Mr. Jefferson?
JEFFERSON
Please.
WOMAN
With such sentiments you may have to be content to remain Vice President.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
I would tell you something. I was no saint. But then, you never supposed I was, did you? I was vain, as all men are vain. Ambitious, as you are ambitious. Given to compromise, as each of us must ever compromise with necessity. And yet in the year 1801 I knew that there are certain capitulations of conscience which only serve to get rid of life, but not to enjoy life. For the enjoyment of life there can be but one system of ethics for men and for nations—to be grateful, to be faithful to all engagements and under all circumstances, to be open and generous, and to affirm endlessly the doctrine that opinion must be free, conscience must be free, the human mind must be free.

Those who opposed me did not believe this. There were even some who befriended me who did not believe this.
VOICE
Mr. Jefferson, it is rumored that if elected, you will nominate Mr. Albert Gallatin your Secretary of the Treasury.
JEFFERSON
He is the best man for the post.
VOICE
That may be. But Albert Gallatin is a foreigner.
JEFFERSON
Are you not also a foreigner?

VOICE
(outraged) Mr. Jefferson, I was born in Connecticut.
JEFFERSON
And who were they who populated the wilderness of Connecticut if not foreigners come to America from Europe?
VOICE
I am giving you the practical advice of a practical politician.
JEFFERSON
Sometimes such advice
can lead to meanness and to narrowness of
spirit. I acknowledge that you come to me
in friendship.
VOICE
I do.
JEFFERSON
To tell me that a man must yield what he prizes most in himself to obtain what he most desires from his countrymen.
VOICE
Have you no desire to be President?
JEFFERSON
Not for the power or the emoluments of high office but for the sake of certain abiding principles of human reason and human intellect.
VOICE
Take care, Mr. Jefferson, your stubbornness will yet defeat your principles--and your intellect.

JEFFERSON MUSIC
He named himself my friend, and this was his counsel and his wisdom. My mouth became sour with the taste of it. Listen to me--I say it again: "I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man." I have pledged upon the altar of God the homage of reason, the pure and holy and everlasting struggle against the disease of ignorance and the festering corruptions of bigotry. And even as I pledged myself, there came another to me, holding in his hands a book.
MAN
Do you know this volume, Mr. Jefferson? *The Age of Reason* by one Thomas Paine. Do you know it?
JEFFERSON
A rather tendentious work, but not without interest.
MAN
Do you defend Tom Paine?
JEFFERSON
I do not defend his bad manners,
nor his disposition to invective, if that is
what you mean.
MAN
Do you defend this book?
JEFFERSON
The things which are good in it, I do; the things which give affront to human sensibility, I do not. Sir, have you read the book you hold in your hand?
MAN
No.
JEFFERSON
If I may judge by your tone, while not having read it, nevertheless, you denounce it.
MAN
It is a book of blasphemy. The work of an atheist who denies God.
JEFFERSON
You are certain of that?
MAN
So certain that I will do this.
(the sound of pages torn)
JEFFERSON
In the name of God, stop that!
MAN
I am destroying a blasphemy in the name of God.
JEFFERSON
(after a pause) You have committed a greater blasphemy.

MAN
I am defending my religion.
JEFFERSON
Is your religion so weak that it cannot stand the test of truth and reason! If Thomas Paine's book is false in its facts, disprove them; if false in its reasoning, refute it. But for God's own sake, let us freely hear both sides if we choose.
MAN
I do not choose. Thomas Paine stands for paganism.
JEFFERSON
In the pages you have just destroyed, Thomas Paine declares: "God is the cause of all things. Incomprehensible and difficult as it is for a man to conceive what a first cause is, he arrives at the belief of it from the tenfold greater difficulty of disbelieving it." Sir, was it an atheist who wrote that?
MAN
Thomas Paine did!
JEFFERSON
The words are at your feet—torn and mutilated.
MAN
(after a pause) I am sorry. Truly sorry.
JEFFERSON
And do you know where those words were written?
MAN
No, Mr. Jefferson.
JEFFERSON
In the dungeon into which Thomas Paine was thrown by the tyranny of Robespierre and his fellows. And do you know for whom he wrote these words?
MAN
No.
JEFFERSON
For the people of France, because they were running headlong into atheism. I am quoting Thomas Paine: "I want to fix them to the first article of every man's creed, who has any creed at all—I believe in God."
MAN
Mr. Jefferson, I am ashamed of myself.
JEFFERSON
You are a good man.
MAN
Me?
JEFFERSON
You are capable of shame. And any man so capable will not continue to despoil people of their opinions. This is the evil we must both fight—those who would subject opinion to coercion. Reason and free inquiry are the only effectual agents against error. If the Roman government had not permitted free inquiry, Christianity could never have been introduced. It is error alone which needs coercion to support it. Truth can stand by itself. All it needs is freedom, and that is what I am contending for.
MAN
(slowly) You are embroiled in a great contest, beset on all sides, and I have come here uninvited to add to your misery.
JEFFERSON
On the contrary you have made me happy. For there was a difference between us, which we have resolved without bloodshed and without rancor. Now if you will excuse me, Mr. Adams has asked me to call, and I must not keep the President waiting.
MAN
Will you shake my hand, Mr. Jefferson?
JEFFERSON
Gladly. Sir, I go to the Executive Mansion. Come, walk with me.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
You also—you who listen—come also and walk with me. For there is a time for standing and a time for going; there is a time for sleeping and there is a time for awakening.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
In the year 1801, while Congress continued in

deadlock, I went to the House of American Presidents and there I found John Adams, embittered by defeat and wishing a plague upon me and upon Aaron Burr. And yet Mr. Adams was attentive to courtesy.

ADAMS
Will you take a cup of wine with me?

JEFFERSON
I will, Mr. Adams. Thank you.
(sound of wine poured)

ADAMS
And you wish your wine diluted with water?

JEFFERSON
Please.

ADAMS
You see I remember your character. Mr. Jefferson dilutes his wine but not his philosophy. Well, since I am beaten in this contest by you and Mr. Burr, I will only say that I will be as faithful a subject as any you will have. *(pause)* You don't drink.

JEFFERSON
I wish no faithful subjects, Mr. Adams.

ADAMS
The republican Mr. Jefferson.

JEFFERSON
Once we were friends.

ADAMS
Yes, once.

JEFFERSON
Adams, this is no personal contest between you and me. If certain ideas we hold are in collision, they should not be allowed to affect our personal relations.

ADAMS
Your name is at the head of your party; my name is at the head of mine.

JEFFERSON
Were we both to die today, tomorrow two other men would be put in place of ours.

ADAMS
I dare say. Jefferson, it is in your power to obtain election in an instant.

JEFFERSON
Is it, Mr. President?

ADAMS
Declare you will not turn out Federalist officeholders, that you will maintain a strong navy, and—

JEFFERSON
Yes?

ADAMS
That you will keep this nation strong against the menace of the French Directory.

JEFFERSON
I see no menace, Mr. Adams, that the good sense of the people cannot overcome.

ADAMS
France has overthrown the republics of Holland and Switzerland and Venice. Her agents are here in our midst.

JEFFERSON
A member of your Cabinet proclaimed that I am such a French agent.

ADAMS
Politics has made wiser men foolish. Pickering went too far; I dismissed him.

JEFFERSON
There is yet time for you to dismiss from prison the editors of republican newspapers whom Mr. Pickering has persecuted.

ADAMS
Those editors and those newspapers slandered me.

JEFFERSON
I am slandered each day by your Federalist newspapers. I would not imprison their editors.

ADAMS
You will not change your mind.

JEFFERSON
I hope not, Mr. Adams. If I were given a choice of government without newspapers or newspapers without government, I would choose the second.

ADAMS
It is a good thing Timothy Pickering is not

present to overhear you; he would send you to jail for much less.

JEFFERSON

I know what Pickering is capable of. He has exploited the French threat to put down all contrary opinion. He has branded as seditious men whose crime was that their views were contrary to his own. Sir, there is some doubt as to whether Aaron Burr or I will become the next President; there can be no doubt, however, that your Alien and Sedition Laws and the extremism of Mr. Pickering have contributed to the defeat of John Adams.

ADAMS

(after a pause) I am weary of the whole business. Do you think I don't know what has happened? Under these wretched Laws we have proscribed some of the ablest, most influential, and best characters in the Union. And yet, Jefferson, you will not deny that we are in danger.

JEFFERSON

I will not deny it,
although we may differ upon the source
of the danger.

ADAMS

You mean then
to let the Alien and
Sedition Laws die.

JEFFERSON

If I am elected I will pardon every man convicted for violating those Acts, for I consider them to be a nullity—as absolute and as palpable as if Congress had ordered us to fall down and worship a golden image.

ADAMS

I shall not debate this question with you. But I warn you that you expose the people to great danger.

JEFFERSON

Freedom is always in danger of those who would abuse freedom to achieve authority. Still, for freedom's sake we must learn to live with danger, even as the farmer or merchant who conducts his enterprise learns to live with the risk of failure. We shall risk and live.

ADAMS

I wonder. *(pause)* Jefferson,
it is within your instant power to make yourself
the third President of the United States,
but you will not say the word, and you will
not be elected.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON

Mr. Adams was a poor prophet. In the year 1801 I was elected to succeed him.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON

They said to me on March 4, 1801, that I spoke inaudibly, and that my words of inauguration were only dimly heard. But they must be heard and understood. I say them again for you. *(music stops)* Let us all bear in mind this sacred principle, that although the will of the majority is in all cases to prevail, that will, to be rightful, must be reasonable; that the minority possess their equal rights, which equal laws must protect, and to violate which would be oppression ...Let us reflect that having banished from our land that religious intolerance under which mankind so long bled and suffered, we have yet gained little if we countenance a political intolerance as despotic, as wicked, and capable of as bitter and bloody persecutions. During the throes and convulsions of the ancient world, during the agonizing spasms of infuriated man, seeking through blood and slaughter his long-lost liberty, it was not surprising that the agitations of the billows should reach even this distant and peaceful shore; that this should be more felt and feared by some, less by others; that this should have divided opinions as to measures of safety. But every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle.

SINGER

I sing you no lullaby,
  Bring you no lullaby,
Sing you no lullaby,
  Sweet though it be.
I sing you awakening,
  Bring you awakening,
Sing you awakening,
  Pain though it be.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON

Let us then with courage pursue our attachment to representative government, to this chosen country with room enough for our descendants to the hundredth and thousandth generation; entertaining a due sense of our equal right to the use of our own faculties, to the acquisitions of our industry, to honor and confidence from our fellow citizens, resulting not from birth, but from our actions and their sense of them; enlightened by a benign religion, professed indeed and practiced in various forms, yet all of them including honesty, truth, temperance, gratitude—and the love of man.

SINGER

And Thomas Jefferson said *(repeat)* I have sworn upon the altar of God
Eternal hostility
Against every form of tyranny
Over the mind of man.

present to overhear you; he would send you to jail for much less.

JEFFERSON

I know what Pickering is capable of. He has exploited the French threat to put down all contrary opinion. He has branded as seditious men whose crime was that their views were contrary to his own. Sir, there is some doubt as to whether Aaron Burr or I will become the next President; there can be no doubt, however, that your Alien and Sedition Laws and the extremism of Mr. Pickering have contributed to the defeat of John Adams.

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MUSIC

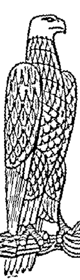
JEFFERSON

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X

THE GROUND OF JUSTICE

by MORTON WISHENGRAD



VOICE
"This story is true in a way, precisely because it is false in a way." Certain of these events have been imagined, but the words of Thomas Jefferson are in the spirit in which he spoke, and his spirit is for now.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
In the stormy year 1800, one James Thomson Callender, a journalist of malignant temper, turned the vituperation of his pen against the character of Mr. John Adams, President of the United States.
(a door slamming)
PRINTER
Mr. Callender, I dare not set this into type.
CALLENDER
You will set into type what I have written down. I pay you to print what I write.
PRINTER
There is a law against seditious utterance.
CALLENDER
Go back to your printing room, Mr. Jennings.
PRINTER
You have called the President an ignoramus and a hypocrite.
CALLENDER
Do you want the proof of it? I have it.
PRINTER
Have you no fear of prison, Mr. Callender?
CALLENDER
No, Mr. Jennings. Let the world know that John Adams is an egregious fool. Go to your bench and print it and I will take the consequences.

MUSIC

(sound of a gavel)
CHASE
James Thomson Callender, stand before the bar of justice.
CALLENDER
I have not had a fair trial.
CHASE
Let the prisoner be silent.
CALLENDER
This court has refused to hear the testimony of defense witnesses.
(gavel again)
CHASE
The Court warns you again, Mr. Callender. Be silent.
CALLENDER
Why do you not let me prove the truth of my assertions?
CHASE
Because there is no truth in your libels against a great and a good man in whose hands the American people have confided their dearest interests. You have impugned the wisdom of the sovereign people who have elected John Adams. James Thomson Callender, this court fines you the sum of two hundred dollars and sentences you to be imprisoned for nine months.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
In the year 1801 I took office as third President of the United States, succeeding John Adams. It was a year in which the prisons of America

Characters:

JEFFERSON

EX-PRESIDENT ADAMS

YOUNG JOHN ADAMS

ABIGAIL ADAMS, HIS WIFE

CALLENDER

JUSTICE CHASE

JONATHAN SEWALL

PATRICK CARR

DR. JEFFRIES

JOSIAH QUINCY

BAILEY

PRINTER

TOUGH

SOLDIER

MAN

CLERK

JUDGE

JUROR

SINGER

JEFFERSON
If you have forgotten it, dear Mrs. Adams, I will recall for you a story of justice and Lawyer Adams. It is seemly that I speak of him—because fifty years after the Declaration of Independence, on July 4th, 1826, I yielded the ghost, and on the same day John Adams as well. His brother in death, therefore, I would tell you now of that high moment in his life when mercy and truth were met together, when righteousness and peace kissed each other, and when out of the bloody, troubled earth there sprang up a lesson of justice to all men and in all times.

On the shameful night of March 5, 1770, in the colonial city of Boston, there was a layer of ice upon the ground and a young moon to light the sky. So innocent a moon to behold the fury of earth.

TOUGH
Redcoats, why don't you fire?

JEFFERSON
Nine quaking British soldiers surrounded by the dregs and offscourings of Boston.

TOUGH
The lobsterbacks are cowards. Make them fire.

SOLDIER
Disperse and go to your homes.

TOUGH
Men, the lobsterback says disperse and go to your homes.
(a hard surf of laughter)

SOLDIER
We don't want trouble with you.

TOUGH
(mimicking) But we want trouble with you. Don't we, men?

SOLDIER
We mean to defend ourselves.

TOUGH
Suppose we see, lobsterback. All right, my liberty boys, show the Redcoats the gifts we bring them.
(the crash of missiles thrown against a wall)

SOLDIER
(he groans) For the last time—disperse and go to your homes.
(a second crash of missiles)
(the sound of many groans)

SOLDIER
(half-crying) Soldiers, defend yourselves.
(the crash of muskets)
(a piercing scream)

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
Do you remember it? Four townsmen fell dead and dying upon the ground. They called it the Boston Massacre, and before the night was out, the mob had accomplished its work. Nine British soldiers were arrested for murder.

MUSIC

(pounding on a door)

YOUNG JOHN ADAMS
(through the door) Man, you'll break it down. I'm coming.
(the door opens)

ADAMS
Well, what is it?

MAN
You are John Adams?

ADAMS
Do you break down my door to tell me my name?

MAN
Sir, nine men are held for murder.

ADAMS
I have heard.

MAN
Will you defend them?

ADAMS
I will not.

MAN
But you are a lawyer.

ADAMS
They are British soldiers and I am an American

contained their quota of those proscribed and persecuted for expressions of political opinion. Virtuous opinion, slanderous opinion, opinion founded on the honesty of difference, opinion founded on the corruptions of malice. Yet inquiring neither what the offenders had done, nor against whom they had offended, I discharged every person under persecution of a federal law which violated the freedoms guaranteed by the American Constitution. As an act of charity I even contributed to the repayment of the fine of Callender, the most notorious critic of my predecessor. I must confess that I did not then realize the full baseness of this journalist. I myself afterwards suffered from his malicious pen. But we cannot suppress freedom of speech because it is abused; nor can we permit our courts of justice to become engines of political persecution. Politics causes many sad estrangements. My old friend and correspondent Mrs. Adams viewed these events as a loyal wife, not as a philosopher. *She grew bitter against me.*

(furious scratching of a quill)

EX-PRESIDENT ADAMS
Abigail.

ABIGAIL
(still writing) Yes?

ADAMS
Now I understand why Shakespeare has said, "Many wearing rapiers are afraid of goose-quills." Abigail, are you writing a letter to Mr. Jefferson, or are you trying to draw his blood?

ABIGAIL
Both.

ADAMS
It is a useless letter; Callender has been freed, the incident is closed.

ABIGAIL
Not for me. Someone must inform Mr. Jefferson that by letting loose such vipers as James Callender, he destroys the *distinction between virtue and vice.*

ADAMS
My dear, you are criticizing the President of the United States.

ABIGAIL
I am Mr. Jefferson's citizen; that is my privilege.

ADAMS
(laughs) Callender thought it was his privilege to criticize me.

ABIGAIL
John Adams, will you make a jest of this?

ADAMS
No, Abigail. For this thing has been a deep wound. Perhaps I am not as good a Christian as you. I could not bring myself to write Thomas Jefferson. The rancor would spill over.

ABIGAIL
Therefore, sir, please be *still long enough for* me to finish this letter.

(resume the scratch of the quill)

ADAMS
(after a pause) Abigail, however you write, let it not be with spitefulness.

ABIGAIL
There is no spitefulness here. I am asking Thomas Jefferson to define his concept of justice. I mean to have his answer.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
Abigail Adams, how shall I answer you? We are dead you and I, and John Adams is dead. And yet justice lives. In the name of justice I freed James Callender, blackguard.

I remind you, dear Madam, there was a time, long ago, when John Adams spoke in my own language and in his own true accent.

SINGER
And Thomas Jefferson Said
And Thomas Jefferson Said
I Have Sworn Upon the Altar of God
Eternal Hostility
Against Every Form of Tyranny
Over the Mind of Man.

MUSIC

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ADAMS
I have heard.

MAN
Will you defend them?

ADAMS
I will not.

MAN
But you are a lawyer.

ADAMS
They are British soldiers and I am an American

patriot. There are Tory lawyers enough in Boston City to defend them.

MAN

I have been to them, Mr. Adams; they refuse.

ADAMS

All of them?

MAN

Every last one. They are afraid of the vengeance of the mob.

ADAMS

And you, are you not also afraid?

MAN

I am terribly afraid.

ADAMS

Then why do you not go home and be safe in your bed?

MAN

I was bred an Englishman. It was told me when I was yet a boy that every man—whether he be thief, scoundrel, or murderer—is entitled to the benefit of counsel and a fair trial. *(pause)* You do not answer me, Mr. Adams.

ADAMS

My answer is that you go home.

MAN

That is no answer.

ADAMS

I am the sworn enemy of every British Redcoat in Massachusetts.

MAN

Mr. Adams, there is no virtue in doing justice to those who befriend you. The test of virtue is to do justice to those who would do you harm, and whom you have reason to hate. Sir, do I speak falsehood?

ADAMS

No, you speak what is true.

MAN

Then I would speak a further truth. Before I came to you they told me that John Adams was a poor man. If you accept the cause of these soldiers there will be hardly any money for your fee. Perhaps there will be no fee. It would be dishonest if I did not tell you so. Now, Mr. Adams, will you take this case?

MUSIC

JEFFERSON

Your husband, Mrs. Adams, did not quickly answer. You knew him better than I, and he was a stubborn man. Still there is a stubbornness of cowardice and a stubbornness of faith, and one is true to the surface and one is true to the depths. The accused soldiers were his enemies. To defend them would be at the possible cost of his own friends and his hope of political advancement. Moreover, he was poor and these soldiers could not pay. Nor would he accept pay. Yes, Lawyer Adams was a stubborn man and because there was no advantage in the case, out of his stubbornness, he made his answer.

ADAMS

I shall talk to my young partner Josiah Quincy. We will take the case.

MUSIC

(sound of horse and carriage)

SEWALL

Adams, do you wonder why I have asked you to ride with me in my carriage?

ADAMS

Yes, Mr. Sewall, I do wonder a little.

SEWALL

Yet you do not ask.

ADAMS

I am sure you will tell me.

SEWALL

Delightful. The news that you are to defend these poor soldiers has given great satisfaction to the Governor and to respectable society in Boston.

ADAMS

Has it?

SEWALL

This will be brought to the attention of His Majesty.

ADAMS
(drily) I believe my name has already been brought to the attention of His Majesty.
SEWALL
Everything is different—now that you have quit these rebels.
ADAMS
Mr. Sewall, perhaps you should order your coachman to stop your carriage at once.
SEWALL
Eh, what's that, Adams?
ADAMS
I am a rebel as stubborn and unyielding as my cousin Samuel Adams.
SEWALL
Coachman, stop the horses. Mr. John Adams is leaving us. *(pause)* I was deceived in you, sir. You are still part of the rabble of Boston.
ADAMS
I am.
SEWALL
And I suppose you weep for the ruffians who have been shot dead?
ADAMS
Tomorrow I shall march behind their coffins. Yes, I shall weep—for whatever their behavior, they were human beings; however they spoke, in their own foolish way they spoke *for* liberty; whereas those soldiers I have elected to defend stand for the perpetuation of tyranny, and they are my enemies. Good day, Mr. Sewall, I return to my friends.

MUSIC

(crash of a stone through glass)
ABIGAIL
(on a small scream) John, what was that?
ADAMS
(slowly) That, my dear Abigail, unless I am mistaken, was a communication from a friend. Oh, the wretched, cowardly ruffians. To cast a stone into a man's house where his child lies sleeping!
ABIGAIL
Other than the glass there is no damage. The baby sleeps.
ADAMS
(bitterly) Aye.
ABIGAIL
This must not discourage you.
ADAMS
Abigail, I will tell you something; a man can be your enemy and be without spot and honorable; and a man can call himself of your persuasion and your friend and be a liar, a fomentor of bloodshed, a cheat and a murderer.
ABIGAIL
John Adams, you are not a simple man. Why would you have other men simple and life itself simple? There is evil among the patriots, yet the cause is good and will survive their evil.
ADAMS
Abigail, we planned this riot.
ABIGAIL
Not John Adams.
ADAMS
We provoked the mischief.
ABIGAIL
I didn't and you didn't.
ADAMS
My party, my faction did and the blame for it is also mine. Three men are dead by it and a fourth is dying.
ABIGAIL
Where are you going?
ADAMS
To prepare my case. To talk to Patrick Carr, the dying man. Don't wait for me. I may be late.

MUSIC

JEFFRIES
Not too long, Mr. Adams, the man is very weak.
ADAMS
Yes, Doctor. *(pause)* Patrick, I am a lawyer.
CARR
I need no lawyer. It would be a priest I need.

ADAMS
If you cannot talk, I will come again.
CARR
Do not go, sir. I would talk.
ADAMS
Why did you go to the scene of the riot?
CARR
I am Irish.
I hold no great love for the English.
ADAMS
Did you go carrying a cudgel?
CARR
I did not. But other men did. Cudgels, pieces of ice and stone, sticks.
ADAMS
Were the soldiers abused?
CARR
They were. A great deal.
ADAMS
If the soldiers had not fired, would they have been hurt?
CARR
Hurt dead, as I am hurt dead. In Ireland I have seen—
ADAMS
No more talking, Patrick.
CARR
No, I must. I have seen mobs gather in Ireland, and the soldiers called out to quell the people. But never did I see soldiers stand so much abuse. Doctor, in the name of Mary, a sip of water.
JEFFRIES
Patrick, it is not good for you.
CARR
Many things have not been good for me and I have done them. I would see a priest—to tell him.
JEFFRIES
He is sent for. *(pause)* Hold your head up, and try not to drink too much.
CARR
(drinks, sighs) Lawyer.
ADAMS
Yes, Patrick.
CARR
The man whose bullet kills me—
ADAMS
Yes.
CARR
Mind which one he is. Say to him that Patrick Carr does not blame him. He fired to save himself.
ADAMS
I will tell him.
CARR
Do so, Lawyer. For I would go to Jesus with no man's blood upon my hands.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
Patrick Carr died, the fourth who was slain. And John Adams, in the anguish of his own heart, prepared to defend the soldier who slew him. On November 27, 1770, in the colonial city of Boston and in the tenth year of the reign of George the Third, the prisoners were brought into the court and set to the bar.
(sound of gavel)
CLERK
Hugh White, William Wemms, James Hartegan, William McCauley, Matthew Killroy, William Warren, John Carroll, Hugh Montgomery—you are charged with murder. How do you plead?
SOLDIER
Not guilty.
CLERK
God send you a good deliverance. Gentlemen of the jury, look upon the prisoners. *(pause)* They have pleaded not guilty, and for trial have put themselves upon God and their country, which country you are. Good men and true, stand together and hearken to your evidence.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
The law is reason free from passion. The law

is light in the darkening world. The law is the commandment of God. "Ye shall have but one manner of law, as well for the stranger, as for one of your own country. The law is open and the law is good if a man but use it lawfully." The law is truth—and the good words that young Josiah Quincy spoke to a Boston jury.

QUINCY
There are eight lives in issue. And in trying these prisoners, you are paying a debt you owe the community for your own protection and safety; by the same mode of trial are your own rights to receive a determination; and in your turn, a time may come when you will expect and claim a similar return from some other jury.

JUDGE
Four men are dead, Mr. Quincy.

QUINCY
God must avenge them, sir; the law indulges no man in being his own avenger.

JUDGE
It is set down in Holy Writ, "Whoso sheddeth Man's blood, by Man shall his blood be shed."

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
Josiah Quincy took his place. And plain John Adams rose to speak a word of justice for the Redcoats he despised. For whom but the despised shall the word be spoken? Your friends do not require it; but someone must rise to speak for the reviled, for the man who is hated, for him who is contemptible and unbefriended. John Adams spoke quietly.

ADAMS
May it please your honors, and you, gentlemen of the jury, I am for the prisoners at the bar and shall apologize for it only in the words of the Marquis Beccaria: "If I can but be the instrument of preserving one life, his blessing and tears of transport shall be a sufficient consolation to me for the contempt of all mankind." It is more beneficial that many guilty persons should escape unpunished, than one innocent person should suffer. I call Mr. Bailey as witness for the defendants.

ADAMS
Mr. Bailey, on the night of March 5th, what did you see?

BAILEY
A large crowd of men and boys
surrounding these soldiers, and forcing them back.

ADAMS
How did they force them back?

BAILEY
By throwing things.

ADAMS
What things?

BAILEY
Stones, sticks, pieces of ice.

ADAMS
How large were these pieces of ice?

BAILEY
Larger than my fist. And hard enough to hurt any man.

ADAMS
What words were spoken, Mr. Bailey?

BAILEY
They taunted the soldiers. Called them coward and Redcoat and worse things. They cried, "Kill them!"

ADAMS
Were any of the soldiers struck down? Any that you yourself saw?

BAILEY
That soldier.

ADAMS
How was he struck down?

BAILEY
By a club. He fell to his knees and his gun flew out of his hands. As soon as he was able to rise, he took it up and another club smote him in the shoulder.

ADAMS
What did the soldier do then?

BAILEY
He fired his gun.

ADAMS
And what was the consequence of his action?

BAILEY
A man died.

ADAMS
Thank you, Mr. Bailey, you may leave the stand.

ADAMS
Gentlemen of the jury, this soldier by the testimony you have heard killed a man. You must decide whether it was murder or manslaughter. You must judge whether he had not reason to suppose that his life was in danger. He is a soldier come among a populace bitter and hostile to the uniform he wears. And he was knocked down by men who promised that they would kill him. What could he do? Gentlemen, do you expect he should behave like a stoic philosopher lost in apathy? Patient as Epictetus while his master was breaking his legs with a cudgel? He asks the justice of our law. The law which is devoid of desire and fear, lust and anger. The written reason of our justice, which retains some measure of divine perfection. The law which is deaf, inexorable, inflexible. Inexorable to the lamentations of these prisoners, but deaf—deaf as an adder to the clamors of the populace. *(pause)* I am done.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
John Adams was wrong. He was not done. For this was the highest and the purest moment of his life. And he spoke for exact and equal justice in a world where reason is subject to the winds of human passion. In the month of November, 1770, a jury of Massachusetts men withdrew for two hours and a half and returned with their verdict.
(sound of gavel)

CLERK
Gentlemen of the Jury, how do you say?

JUROR
We find William Wemms, James Hartegan, William McCauley, Hugh White, William Warren, and John Carroll—not guilty.

JUROR
(continuing) We find Hugh Montgomery and Matthew Killroy, not guilty of murder, but guilty of manslaughter.

ADAMS
May it please the court.

JUDGE
What is it, Mr. Adams?

ADAMS
The prisoners Matthew Killroy and Hugh Montgomery pray the benefit of the clergy.

JUDGE
Matthew Killroy and Hugh Montgomery, do you understand fully this request made for you? Speak one of you.

SOLDIER
We understand, Your Honor. It is English law, to demand trial by ecclesiastical court.

JUDGE
And to be branded in the thumb as a manslayer. Do you understand that?

SOLDIER
We are ready to be branded.

JEFFERSON
The bailiffs brought the branding irons and placed them in the fire. And two young soldiers held out their hands to be burned.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
My dear Mrs. Adams, we have allowed ourselves some improvement now, have we not?

There is an end of burnings. There is an end of the rack of inquisitor and the smell of his fagots. And there is something better: the constant striving for equal and exact justice to all men, of whatever state or persuasion, religious or political. God bless our aspirations. God bless you, Madam, and God bless John Adams —for in his immortal spirit mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other, and justice springeth out of the earth.

MUSIC

XI

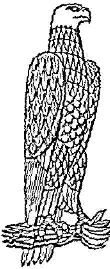
THE EXPERIMENT OF A FREE PRESS

by GEORGE PROBST

Characters:

JEFFERSON

ACCUSING VOICES



JEFFERSON MUSIC

Welcome, sir. Welcome to Monticello. I appreciate the courtesy of your coming and the intent of your visit. You have asked me to recount the growth of freedom of the press in America as I saw it—in war and peace and political controversy—and to state what I believe to be the meaning of the Liberty of the Press.

JEFFERSON MUSIC

I wonder if you will allow me first, however, to show you around my own dear Monticello. Here in my retirement on this little mountain I am the happy possessor of a rich and varied scene that nature has spread beneath our eyes. Here with majesty we ride above the storms. I can look down into the workhouse of nature, see her clouds, hail, snow, rain, thunder, all fabricated at our feet! And the glorious sun gilding the tops of the mountain, and giving life to all nature.

Ah, but you are impatient to hear of the importance of a free press in the lives of my countrymen. Forgive me if I speak of my old preference for life here at Monticello rather than begin at once to tell you of the torture of my experience on the gridiron of the newspapers.

If you will step this way, we will go in now by this portico that faces the east. The whole house has been in an almost constant state of re-building from the time that I first leveled off the summit and began to lay out the grounds half a century ago. I hope that I shall always [illegible] literature is my [illegible]

Now, after you, sir, through these [illegible] doors into the parlor. The busts of Alexander and Napoleon are there on the pedestals on each side of the door. On the walls are portraits of Bacon, Newton, and Locke; of Columbus, Cortez, and Magellan; of Franklin, Washington, Lafayette, Hamilton, and many other remarkable men. In the dining room and elsewhere are scriptural paintings, among them the ascension of Saint Paul, the Holy Family, the scourging of Christ, and the crucifixion.

Pray advance, sir, and enter my library. Please step over those books on the floor. It is a habit of mine to have sometimes twenty or more of them opened on the floor at once, as I find it aids me to read first one, then another, as I gather information to reply to my correspondence.

JEFFERSON *(continuing)*

Please take this chair. You will find tobacco there beside you.

The freedom of the press I have always deemed one of the essential principles of our government.

While President of the United States, I inaugurated the experiment of complete freedom of the press from control or censorship by government. During that time a distin- [illegible] French citizen, after visiting America

feel nor *see*." Napoleon, the military conqueror, asked no more questions.

I was persuaded at the beginning of my career that the good sense of the people will always be found to be the best army. The people may be led astray for a moment, but will soon correct themselves. They are the only censors of their governors.

Give the people full information of their affairs through the channel of the public papers, and contrive that those papers should penetrate to the whole mass of the people. The basis of our governments being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right; and had it been left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not have hesitated a moment to prefer the latter. But I mean that every man should receive those papers; and *be capable* of *reading* them.

I cherish, therefore, the spirit of the people. Where the press is free, and every man able to read, all is safe. So I believed from almost the beginning of my public life.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON

In the administration of President Adams, the Federalists brought into the lower house of Congress a Sedition bill which among other enormities undertook to make printing certain matters criminal, though the first amendment to the Constitution had expressly forbidden abridgement of freedom of speech or of the press. Indeed this bill and the Alien bill both were so palpably in the teeth of the Constitution as to show they meant to pay no respect to it.

The law was adopted. Seditious libel was defined as any statement tending to weaken the public confidence in the federal officials.

The party in power attempted to suppress freedom of speech and crush political opposition in the noble name of national patriotism. The alleged justification was the danger to the country from revolutionary France, aided and abetted by disloyal Americans, so they claimed. The party in power exploited the foreign situation to their own advantage and grossly underestimated the patriotism of the American people.

I considered the Alien and Sedition Laws as merely an experiment on the American mind to see how far it would bear an avowed violation of the Constitution.

At this time leading Republican journalists such as Thomas Cooper and James Thomson Callender were prosecuted and added to the list of victims of the Sedition Law. There were some twenty-five arrests under the Sedition Act, fifteen indictments, and eleven trials resulting in ten convictions. This campaign of intimidation was supplemented by a number of actions under the common law of seditious libel, which yielded five more convictions.

The Federalists argued that the victims of their prosecutions were given the chance of proving the truth of their statements as a defense, but the judges in these trials so acted that the defendants could not secure witnesses and documents that would enable them to prove that their political assertions were in fact truthful statements.

I, as well as most other Republicans who were able to do it, contributed what I could afford to the support of the Republican papers and printers, paid sums of money for the *Bee*, the *Albany Register*, and other papers when they were staggering under the Sedition Law. I contributed to the paying of the fines of Callender himself, of Holt, Brown, and others suffering under that law. I made Virginia a haven for journalists and others fleeing the Sedition Act. I resisted this tyranny over the press as best I could. Mr. Madison and I fathered the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions in an at-

tempt to rally the states in support of civil liberty.

During this time, in the newspapers, I myself was a fair mark for every man's dirt. I believe some indulged themselves in this exercise who would not have done it had they known me otherwise than through these impure and injurious channels. It is a hard treatment, and for a singular kind of offense, that of having obtained by the labors of a life the indulgent opinions of a part of one's fellow citizens. However, these moral evils must be submitted to, like the physical scourges of tempest and fire.

After my election to the presidency, I pardoned all who were still [illegible]

palpable as if Congress had ordered us to fall down and worship a golden image." Yet I was no advocate of a licentious press, for I had many unhappy moments as the chief of a government that followed the policy of full liberty to the press.

I remember--burned in my mind--*the searing things they wrote of me.*

MUSIC

VOICE I
Jefferson sinfully has a Congo *Harem.*

VOICE II
Under Jefferson as President, all Bibles will be burnt.

VOICE III
Jefferson has denied the right of property, marriage, natural affection, chastity, and decency.

VOICE IV
Jefferson hired mercenary libellers to destroy the reputation of Washington and aims at the overthrow of the Constitution.

VOICE V
In the court of public opinion Mr. Jefferson stands convicted irrevocably of hypocrisy, of treachery, of ingratitude, of impiety, of personal cowardice, of brutal lust.

VOICE VI
Should the infidel Jefferson be elected to the Presidency, the *seal of death* is that moment set on our holy religion, our churches will be prostrated, and some infamous prostitute, under the title of the Goddess of Reason, will preside in the Sanctuaries now devoted *to the* worship of the Most High.

VOICE VII
It was in France where Mr. Jefferson resided nearly seven years, that he sucked in the poisonous doctrines that have corrupted his heart and brain. It was in France that his disposition to theory and his scepticism in religion, morals, and government acquired full strength and vigor. Mr. Jefferson is known to be a theorist in politics as well as in philosophy and morals. He is a philosopher in the worst French sense of the word and as such is a known enemy to the Federal Constitution.

VOICE VIII
It can be proved that the Honorable Thomas *Jefferson*, the man whom the mob delight to honor, obtained his estate and property by fraud and robbery. Lawyer Jefferson defrauded and robbed a widow and her fatherless children of a legacy worth ten thousand pounds sterling while acting as executor of the estate, by keeping the property and paying off his victim in worthless paper money at forty to one. It can be proved--

JEFFERSON
Although frequently solicited by my friends, I never would descend to a newspaper *refutation* of calumny. I never, in any instance, appealed to the retribution of *the* laws. I know that I might have filled the courts of the United States with actions for these slanders, and have ruined, perhaps, *many persons* who are not innocent. But this would be no *equivalent for* the loss of character.

I left them, therefore, to the reproof of their own consciences. If these do not condemn them, there will yet come a day when the false witness will meet a judge who has not slept over these slanders.

Had I undertaken to answer the calumnies of the newspapers, it would have been more than all my own time and that of twenty aides could effect. For while I should be answering one calumny, twenty new ones would be invented. I thought it better to trust to the justice of my countrymen, that they would judge me by what they saw of my conduct on the stage where they placed me, and what they knew of me before the epoch when a particular political party supposed it might answer some view of theirs to vilify me in the public eye.

This is an injury to which duty requires every one to submit whom the public think proper to call into its councils. That is, indeed, the chief consolation for being hated by so many, who, without the least personal knowledge, cover me with their implacable hatred. The only return I will ever make them will be to do them all the good I can—in spite of their teeth.

But my view was generally not comprehended. The celebrated traveller and geographer, Baron Humboldt, called on me at the President's House one day. On taking up one of the day's newspapers which lay upon the table, he was shocked to find its columns teeming with the most wanton abuse against me. He threw it down with indignation, exclaiming, "Why do you not have the fellow hung who dares to write these abominable lies?"

I remember that I replied: "What! Hang the guardians of the public morals? No, sir—rather would I protect the spirit of freedom which dictates even that degree of abuse. Put that paper into your pocket, my good friend, carry it with you to Europe, and when you hear any one doubt the reality of American freedom, show them that paper, and tell them where you found it."

Baron Humboldt left the President's House far from convinced that my ignoring the scurrilities of the newspapers was sound policy. He feared the artillery of the press levelled against my administration would mislead the people.

He feared, too, that although we had banished from the land religious intolerance, under which mankind so long bled and suffered, I was countenancing a political intolerance as despotic, as wicked, and as capable of as bitter and bloody results.

He prophesied that in our republican government—if it proved too weak to protect itself from slander and would lack energy to preserve itself at the polls—a deceived people maddened by falsehood would drive us from office.

I was willing to take that risk. It was with deep pleasure, then, that after the election of 1804 had vindicated my experiment I was able to send Baron Humboldt a tally of the votes and a copy of my second Inaugural Address.

There I remarked to our citizens that: During this administration, and in order to disturb it, the artillery of the press has been levelled against us, charged with whatsoever its licentiousness could devise or dare. These abuses of an institution so important to freedom and science are deeply to be regretted, inasmuch as they tend to lessen its usefulness, and to sap its safety.

They might, indeed, have been corrected by the wholesome punishments reserved and provided by the laws of the several States against falsehood and defamation; but public duties more urgent press on the time of public servants, and the offenders have therefore been left to find their punishment in the public indignation.

Nor was it uninteresting to the world that an experiment should be fairly and fully made, whether freedom of discussion, unaided by

power, is not sufficient for the propagation and protection of truth—whether a government, conducting itself in the true spirit of its constitution, with zeal and purity, and doing no act which it would be unwilling the whole world should witness, can be written down by falsehood and defamation.

The experiment has been tried; you have witnessed the scene; our fellow citizens have looked on, cool and collected; they saw the latent source from which these outrages proceeded; they gathered around their public functionaries, and when the constitution called them to the decision by sufferage, they pronounced their verdict, honorable to those who had served them, and consolatory to the friend of man, who believes he may be intrusted with his own affairs.

No inference is here intended, that the laws, provided by the States against false and defamatory publications, should not be enforced. He who has time, renders a service to public morals and public tranquillity, in reforming these abuses by the salutary coercions of the law.

But the experiment is noted, to prove that, since truth and reason have maintained their ground against false opinions in league with false facts, the press, confined to truth, needs no other legal restraint; the public judgment will correct false reasonings and opinions, on a full hearing of all parties. No other definite line can be drawn between the inestimable liberty of the press and its demoralizing licentiousness. If there still be improprieties which this rule would not restrain, its supplement must be sought in the censorship of public opinion.

JEFFERSON MUSIC

I had hoped that private individuals through legal suits in the courts would have a wholesome effect in restoring the integrity of the press. Nothing was done. I did *not* return to the Sedition Laws of John Adams, but I must confess I was deeply disappointed in the manner in which the American press of that day had abused the boon of freedom.

In 1807, some months before I retired from the presidency, I received a letter from John Norvell, a boy of seventeen who lived in Danville, Kentucky. He wanted help in preparing for his career. He asked my advice on two questions. His queries to me were: What were the best books on social and political philosophy? How should a newspaper be conducted in order to be most useful?

I have a copy of my answer here from my letter file. With your permission I shall read what I wrote to this boy who was thinking of becoming a journalist, and later did become a newspaper editor.

How should a newspaper be conducted, so as to be most useful? I answer, "By restraining it to true facts and sound principles only." Yet I fear such a paper would find few subscribers. It is a melancholy truth that a suppression of the press could not more completely deprive the nation of its benefits, than is done whenever it abandons and prostitutes itself to falsehood.

Nothing could be believed which was seen in the newspapers. I wrote to John Norvell in 1807 that truth itself becomes suspicious by being put into that polluted vehicle. The real extent of this state of misinformation is known only to those who are able to confront the lies of the day with facts within their own knowledge.

I really look with commiseration over the great body of my fellow citizens, who, reading newspapers, lived and died in the belief that they had really known something of what had been passing in the world in their time. General facts may indeed have been collected from newspapers, such as that Europe was at

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not be resisted, when permitted freely to be expressed. The agitation it produces must be submitted to. It is necessary, to keep the political waters pure."

A free and honest press is indispensable if America is to remain the world's best hope.

If you ask *me then*, as we sit here in my library at Monticello, for my summing up, I would repeat what I said in my farewell to the citizens of Washington:

The station which we occupy among the nations of the earth is honorable, but awful. Trusted with the destinies of this solitary republic of the world, the only monument of human rights, and the sole depository of the sacred fire of freedom and self-government, from hence it is to be lighted up in other regions of the earth, if other regions of the earth shall ever become susceptible of its genial influence. All mankind ought, then, with us, to rejoice in its prosperous, and sympathize in its adverse fortunes, as involving everything dear to man. And to what sacrifices of interest, or convenience, ought not these considerations to animate us! To what compromises of opinion and inclination, to maintain harmony and union among ourselves, and to preserve from all danger this hallowed ark of human hope and happiness!

That differences of opinion should arise among men, on politics, on religion, and on every other topic of human enquiry, and that these should be freely expressed in a country where all our faculties are free, *is* to be expected. But these valuable privileges are much perverted when permitted to disturb the harmony of social intercourse, and to lessen the tolerance of opinion. To the honor of society here it has been characterized by a just and generous liberality; and an indulgence of those affections which, without regard to political creeds, constitute the happiness of life.

MUSIC

war, that Napoleon was a successful warrior, that he had subjected a great portion of Europe to his will, etc., etc.; but no details could be relied on.

At that time the man who never looked into a newspaper was better informed than he who read one; inasmuch as he who knows nothing is nearer the truth than he whose mind is filled with falsehoods and errors. He who reads nothing will still learn the great facts from conversation with others.

But how can a newspaper become more useful? I suggested to John Norvell, who wanted to become a journalist, that perhaps an editor might begin a reformation in some such way as this. Divide his paper into four chapters, heading the first Truths, the second Probabilities, the third Possibilities, and the fourth Lies.

The first chapter of Truths would be very short, as it would contain little more than authentic papers, and information from such sources as the editor would be willing to risk his own reputation on. The second—of Probabilities—would contain what, from a mature consideration of all circumstances, his judgment should conclude to be probably true. This should contain too little rather than too much. The third and fourth, containing Possibilities and Lies, should professedly be for those readers who would rather have lies for their money than the blank paper they occupy.

Such an editor, too, would set his face against the demoralizing practice of feeding the public mind habitually on slander, and the depravity of taste which this nauseous diet induces. Defamation is becoming a necessity of life; insomuch that a dish of tea at breakfast in the morning or at dinner in the evening cannot be digested without this stimulant.

Even those who do not believe these abominations, still read them with complacence. Instead of the abhorrence and indignation which should fill a virtuous mind, they betray a secret pleasure in the possibility that some may believe them, though they do not themselves.

It seems to escape them that it is *not* he who prints, but he who *pays* for printing a slander, who is its real author. Thus in the last analysis the public is responsible.

This is what I wrote John Norvell in 1807. Let me answer the surprise on your countenance and show you this letter from my file.

I never believed in censorship by the government. It is so difficult to draw a clear line of separation between the abuse and the wholesome use of the press that I have found it better to trust the public judgment than the government official with the discrimination between truth and falsehood.

You have asked for information on my experiences and views of the principle and the performance of a free press in our country. I have tried to answer you by telling of my intense devotion to the principle of a free press, even when my honor was attacked. And I have reasserted my belief in the supreme usefulness of a truthful press.

I am convinced that there is not a truth on earth which I fear should be known. As President of the United States I lent myself willingly as the subject of a great experiment. This experiment proved that an administration, conducting itself with integrity and common understanding, cannot be battered down by the falsehoods of a licentious press.

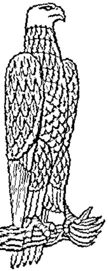
This fact I have established, that the press is impotent when it abandons itself to falsehood. I leave to you, and to others, to restore the press to its strength, by recalling it within the pale of truth.

Despite my own sufferings at the hands of the scribblers for these presses, my trust was never extinguished. I wrote in 1823 to Lafayette, saying, "But the only security of all, is in a free press. The force of public opinion can-

XII

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE UNITED STATES

by MILTON GEIGER



JEFFERSON
Toward the end of my life there was a sound of trowels and hammers in my county of Albemarle. In my mind I could hear the far-off builders as I sat on a terrace on my little mountain, at Monticello. The rhythm of their hammers and trowels echoed in the rhythm of my blood. I sat with Joseph Cabell, my chief collaborator in my last service to mankind. In the dim distance a University was rising.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
We could not see much as yet through the telescope trained on the young foundations far away, Cabell and I. So we sat in our own twilight and spoke of the light rising slowly in the academical village I had planned.

CABELL
It is good, Mr. Jefferson. Very good to see a dream come true.

JEFFERSON
It is good to see good dreams come true, Mr. Cabell.

CABELL
It's idyllic to watch them materialize from up here. You've built well at Monticello.

JEFFERSON
I must build better down there.

CABELL
You do, and for the ages.

JEFFERSON
(a hesitation and darkness) I hope so. I try—

CABELL
Can you doubt it after the long and useful life you have given your country and—may I say so—the world?

JEFFERSON
(slowly) When I die, I want this inscription graven on my stone: "Here was buried Thomas Jefferson, Author of the Declaration of American Independence, of the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom, and Father of the University of Virginia."

CABELL
These are not offices or honors. All are services to man.

JEFFERSON
I should be content. The University is the last of my mortal cares and the last service I can [illegible]

[illegible] plore and expose every subject susceptible to its contemplation. I should be content.

CABELL
You should indeed, sir.

JEFFERSON
I shall die in the hope that light and liberty are on steady advance. We have seen once, within the records of history, a complete eclipse of the human mind, continuing for centuries, by swarms of barbarians. This may come again from time to time, but the art of printing alone and the vast dissemination of books will maintain knowledge where it is, and raise the barbarian to the level of the conquered instead of degrading these to their conquerors.

CABELL
You are troubled, Mr. Jefferson.

Characters:

JEFFERSON

CABELL

SPEAKER OF HOUSE OF DELEGATES

DELEGATE FROM NELSON

WYTHE

DELEGATE FROM NELSON

VOICES

and property of the people but with the people themselves; nor can liberty and property be safe in their hands without information.

WESTMORELAND
(off) Mr. Jefferson is debating his bill before properly detailing it to the legislature. He is out of order as well as out of sequence.

JEFFERSON
I ask your pardon. Simply, gentlemen, my bill proposes to lay off every county into districts five or six miles square, to be called "hundreds." In each of these districts we are to establish a school for teaching reading, writing and arithmetic.

WESTMORELAND
(off: heckling) What about your Greek and Latin, Mr. Jefferson?

JEFFERSON
(in good humor now) They will be patient in death if you will in life, sir.
(some laughter)
(gavel a few times)

SPEAKER
Continue, Mr. Jefferson.

JEFFERSON
The tutor will be publicly supported and all persons in each district will be entitled to send their children to the school for three years, gratis, and as much longer as they please, paying for it.

WESTMORELAND
The latter makes sense; the former does not.

JEFFERSON
Each year the best student in each school, of those parents too poor to give him further education, will be sent forward to one of the grammar schools—of which I propose twenty to be erected in this state—*(with light meaning)* for teaching Greek, Latin *(some chuckles off)*, and geography. Thus the twenty best students will be selected and instructed at the public expense, so far as the grammar schools go. At the end of six years, half of these will be sent for three years, to study such sciences as they shall choose at the College of William and Mary, which is to be enlarged as further proposed in my bill.

WESTMORELAND
The philosophical gentleman attempts too much.

JEFFERSON
The ultimate result of this whole scheme of education would be the teaching of all the children of the State, reading, writing and common arithmetic; turning out annually a smaller number of superior geniuses, well taught in Greek, Latin, geography, and the higher branches of arithmetic; turning out others annually of still superior mental gifts who shall have added such of the sciences as their genius shall have led them to; the furnishing to the wealthier part of the people convenient schools at which their children may be educated at their own expense.

WESTMORELAND
(off) The details, sir. Let's get on with them!
(gavel twice)

SPEAKER
Continue, Mr. Jefferson.

JEFFERSON
My concern is to broaden the educational base of society and at the same time to search out the best talent and genius of our citizenry. The general objects of this law are to provide an education adapted to the years, to the capacity and to the condition of every one, rich or poor, and directed to their freedom and happiness. Specific details are not proper for the law. They must be the business of the officials entrusted with the execution of the law.

SPEAKER
Have you concluded your preliminary remarks to the proposal, Mr. Jefferson?

JEFFERSON
I am prepared now to discuss it in this assembly, sir.

JEFFERSON
No, no.
CABELL
Is it—criticism?
JEFFERSON
Criticism?
CABELL
I deplore most the critics who brand you as an aristocrat, interested in his conservative and sedentary old age only in higher education—neglecting the masses for the more aristocratic and wealthy youth.
JEFFERSON
I answer these critics as I answered General Breckinridge. I wrote him that nobody could doubt my zeal for the general instruction of the people. Who first started such an idea?
CABELL
They forget or they contrive to forget your fight for the Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge forty years ago.
JEFFERSON
Why, before my proposal the idea of such free and general education had never been suggested here. I have never proposed a sacrifice of the primary to the ultimate grade of instruction: I have always kept my eye steadily on the whole system.
CABELL
In a generation, men forget.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
But I remember. Yes, in the year 1779, when I was only 36, I drew a bill which I should have liked to attach to my epitaph. Not until six or seven years later was it even debated by the Legislature of my state, and then I was far away in France, while my friend James Madison spoke for me. As an old man, I will take the liberty of reconstructing that scene freely; and of pleading for my cherished bill in person. Thus I can epitomize the struggle and the hopes of a lifetime.

SPEAKER
(louder as music dies down) A bill which in preamble holds that it is desirable that those persons whom nature hath endowed with genius and virtue should be rendered, by a liberal education, worthy to receive and able to guard the rights and liberties of their fellow citizens and that they should be granted such learning without regard to wealth, birth or other accidental circumstances. The bill is submitted and proposed by Mr. Jefferson, the honorable delegate from the County of Albemarle and a member of the Committee on the Revisal of the Laws. The author will detail the provisions of his bill.
WESTMORELAND
(off) Mr. Speaker!
SPEAKER
The honorable delegate from Westmoreland County.
WESTMORELAND
(bluff, conservative) May I interpolate at this early moment and so save time—that a bill for the dissemination of Greek and Latin among farm boys *may* have virtue—if it does not give them aspirations beyond their station. But there is much more urgent business before the assembly. I submit that Latin being a dead language will remain a long time dead as the saying has it, and can wait until we conveniently arrive at it!
JEFFERSON
May I say before everything else, that I consider this Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge as being on a moral level with the Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom and even with the Declaration of Independence!
VOICES
(ad lib—off) Hear, hear. Hear, hear.
JEFFERSON
Yes! For if a nation expects to be ignorant and free it expects what never was and never will be. There is no safe deposit for the liberty

WESTMORELAND
My constituency will be inclined to think it reduces them to sallow bookworms when they ought to be *behind* a plough or handy for harvesting. Let alone the cost.

JEFFERSON
I propose the free education of the young; does the distinguished delegate propose, in opposition, the sweat and toil of the young?

WESTMORELAND
I propose nothing! I state plainly the sentiment of the people who elected me to this seat and who hold the view that education is not their responsibility.

JEFFERSON
In a free state government, it *is* their responsibility.

WESTMORELAND
Ah, *government!*
That's different.

JEFFERSON
And education is a proper function of government. Education of all of the people up to a point is necessary to safeguard their freedom and happiness. The education of persons of native ability to the highest degree is necessary to provide leaders and to advance knowledge. These should be selected on the grounds of talent and virtue wholly without considerations of wealth and birth. On that trinity I found my philosophy of education. On that logic I found my proposal.

WESTMORELAND
That is a platform, Mr. Jefferson; its logic remains to be decided.

SPEAKER
Mr. Jefferson.

JEFFERSON
Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER
If I may put a question to you.

JEFFERSON
Certainly, sir.

SPEAKER
You say that you believe that the mass of the people can be educated.

JEFFERSON
Convinced, sir, that on their good sense we may rely with the most security for the preservation of a due degree of liberty.

SPEAKER
Is there any precedent for what you propose?

JEFFERSON
It has never been suggested in this State.

SPEAKER
Anywhere?

JEFFERSON
Somewhere, probably, since there is nothing new under the sun.

WESTMORELAND
Has it worked anywhere?

JEFFERSON
I am only concerned that it must work in America.

WESTMORELAND
(off) Educate a rabble!

JEFFERSON
I said the people.

WESTMORELAND
I say it can't be done!

JEFFERSON
Why do you say so?

WESTMORELAND
Because it never *has* been done!

JEFFERSON
By that philosophy, nothing should ever be attempted the first time and nothing therefore ever accomplished.

WESTMORELAND
I speak specifically of the proposal under discussion. Specifically I say that people have never been educated in the mass before and they cannot be now. I am not alone in being skeptical about it.

VOICES
(ad lib) Aye—right—right.

SPEAKER
The meeting is open for discussion.

NELSON
Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER
The honorable delegate from Nelson County has the floor.

NELSON
(off a bit) (more reasonable than Westmoreland: serious and open-minded)
Mr. Jefferson.

JEFFERSON
(on) Yes, sir?

NELSON
Mr. Jefferson, you say that if a nation expects to be ignorant and free it expects what never was and never will be.

JEFFERSON
Yes, sir!

NELSON
Are we not free now?

JEFFERSON
We are. I do not know what we may be tomorrow or the next day.

NELSON
If we cannot be ignorant and free then we must be educated. And there *is* learning, sir, great learning in such men as Dr. Franklin, James Madison, John Adams, George Wythe—all people of your own close acquaintance. All living testimony of great sagacity and learning in America.

JEFFERSON
That is unquestionably true.

NELSON
Why then, this Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge—based on an argument that knowledge is the power to secure us our freedom—when we have knowledge and we have freedom firmly in our grasp?

VOICES
(ad lib)
Aye—good—right.

JEFFERSON
There is learning in America, yes; but it is the great learning of the very few. Should this freedom lie at the mercy of the benevolence, the caprice, the charity, the easy digestion if you please, of a few of the elite? What if these few elect to seize power and turn despot? What then?

WESTMORELAND
(off) Dr. Franklin, Mr. Madison, General Washington? Despots? Come now, Mr. Jefferson!

JEFFERSON
Men change. On the Lupercal they thrice presented Caesar with a kingly crown which he did thrice refuse! Yet he turned despot! No, sir—this Republic must stand upon a rock. Enlighten the many; enlighten the people generally, and tyranny and oppressions of the body and the mind will vanish like evil spirits at the dawn of day.

WESTMORELAND
(off) Do you hold that the mass of people *can* be educated?

JEFFERSON
I do not concur in a certain body of misanthropic belief, that people are ignorant because they are stupid. They are not. I do believe in the educability of the people.

WESTMORELAND
That stable boys can be taught Homer and Plato?

JEFFERSON
There is a certain period in life, say eight to fifteen years of age, reached by children in homespun and by children in velvet alike. At this age the mind, like the body, is not firm enough for laborious occupation. If applied to the young, such labor exhibits, in its tender subjects of whatever origin, the flattering appearance of their being men while they are yet children, but ending in reducing them to children when they should be men.

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There is learning in America, yes; but it is the great learning of the very few. Should this freedom lie at the mercy of the benevolence, the caprice, the charity, the easy digestion if you please, of a few of the elite? What if these few elect to seize power and turn despot? What then?

WESTMORELAND
(off) Dr. Franklin, Mr. Madison, General Washington? Despots? Come now, Mr. Jefferson!

JEFFERSON
Men change. On the Lupercal they thrice presented Caesar with a kingly crown which he did thrice refuse! Yet he turned despot! No, sir—this Republic must stand upon a rock. Enlighten the many; enlighten the people generally, and tyranny and oppressions of the body and the mind will vanish like evil spirits at the dawn of day.

WESTMORELAND
(off) Do you hold that the mass of people *can* be educated?

JEFFERSON
I do not concur in a certain body of misanthropic belief, that people are ignorant because they are stupid. They are not. I do believe in the educability of the people.

WESTMORELAND
That stable boys can be taught Homer and Plato?

JEFFERSON
There is a certain period in life, say eight to fifteen years of age, reached by children in homespun and by children in velvet alike. At this age the mind, like the body, is not firm enough for laborious occupation. If applied to the young, such labor exhibits, in its tender subjects of whatever origin, the flattering appearance of their being men while they are yet children, but ending in reducing them to children when they should be men.

WESTMORELAND
My constituency will be inclined to think it reduces them to sallow bookworms when they ought to be behind a plough or handy for harvesting. Let alone the cost.

JEFFERSON
I propose the free education of the young; does the distinguished delegate propose, in opposition, the sweat and toil of the young?

WESTMORELAND
I propose nothing! I state plainly the sentiment of the people who elected me to this seat and who hold the view that education is not their responsibility.

JEFFERSON
In a free state government, it *is* their responsibility.

WESTMORELAND
Ah, *government!*
That's different.

JEFFERSON
And education is a proper function of government. Education of all of the people up to a point is necessary to safeguard their freedom and happiness. The education of persons of native ability to the highest degree is necessary to provide leaders and to advance knowledge. These should be selected on the grounds of talent and virtue wholly without considerations of wealth and birth. On that trinity I found my philosophy of education. On that logic I found my proposal.

WESTMORELAND
That is a platform, Mr. Jefferson; its logic remains to be decided.

SPEAKER
Mr. Jefferson.

JEFFERSON
Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER
If I may put a question to you.

JEFFERSON
Certainly, sir.

SPEAKER
You say that you believe that the mass of the people can be educated.

JEFFERSON
Convinced, sir, that on their good sense we may rely with the most security for the preservation of a due degree of liberty.

SPEAKER
Is there any precedent for what you propose?

JEFFERSON
It has never been suggested in this State.

SPEAKER
Anywhere?

JEFFERSON
Somewhere, probably, since there is nothing new under the sun.

WESTMORELAND
Has it worked anywhere?

JEFFERSON
I am only concerned that it must work in America.

WESTMORELAND
(off) Educate a rabble!

JEFFERSON
I said the people.

WESTMORELAND
I say it can't be done!

JEFFERSON
Why do you say so?

WESTMORELAND
Because it never *has* been done!

JEFFERSON
By that philosophy, nothing should ever be attempted the first time and nothing therefore ever accomplished.

WESTMORELAND
I speak specifically of the proposal under discussion. Specifically I say that people have never been educated in the mass before and they cannot be now. I am not alone in being skeptical about it.

VOICES
(ad lib) Aye—right—right.

WESTMORELAND
Other competent observers think that it cannot be done without bringing education down to the level of the dullest, the most stupid of the people so that *nobody* gets a good education.

JEFFERSON
All will not be reduced to a dead level of mediocrity; we aspire, rather, to raise the lowest to more than he has been. All at least will receive a *better* education.

WESTMORELAND
No alchemy or dream will change sows' ears into silk purses. You cannot make virtue where there is none, sir!

JEFFERSON
I say that there is a natural aristocracy among men, founded on virtue and talents. There is also an artificial aristocracy founded on wealth and birth without either virtue or talents. That natural aristocracy I consider as the most precious gift of nature for the instruction, the responsibilities, and the government of society.

WESTMORELAND
A mongrel aristocracy of tradesmen, clerks, and landless tenants in the seats of power. Absurd and visionary!

JEFFERSON
My plan is not indiscriminate. It provides for a system of selection based on ability. That is very clear. Besides — if anybody thinks that kings and nobles are good guardians of the people's happiness, let them go to Europe where they have them. It is the best school in the universe to cure him of that folly. He will see there that those descriptions of men are an abandoned confederacy against the happiness of the mass of the people.

WYTHE
(off) Mr. Speaker.

WESTMORELAND
May I point out, Mr. Jefferson, that Europe *is not* America.

NELSON
(off) What about England, Mr. Jefferson?

JEFFERSON
The people of England are less oppressed than those on the continent of Europe but they are in danger too, for nobility, wealth and pomp are the objects of their admiration.

WYTHE
(off) Mr. Speaker!

SPEAKER
Mr. Wythe.

JEFFERSON
(overlapping speaker a bit) I look to the diffusion of light and education as the resource most to be relied upon for improving the condition, promoting the virtue, and advancing the happiness of man.

WESTMORELAND
Yes–*how?*

SPEAKER
The chair recognizes Mr. Wythe.

WESTMORELAND
Men are men and base blood is base.

SPEAKER
(gavel) The member from Westmoreland County is out of order!

WESTMORELAND
(overlapping) Can the brier and the bramble ever become the vine and the olive?

SPEAKER
(gavel) Order!
(gavel a couple more times: silence)
Mr. Wythe has the floor.

WYTHE
(off) I call for a vote on Mr. Jefferson's bill.

SPEAKER
A vote is called for on Mr. Jefferson's Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge. Seconded?

VOICES
(ad lib) (off but low, muttering) No–no.

WESTMORELAND
Mr. Jefferson has not defended his proposal to

the satisfaction of myself or, I fancy, this whole assembly.

VOICES
(ad lib) That's right—no.

WESTMORELAND
Mr. Jefferson entertains the belief that briers and brambles can indeed be transformed into vine and olive. A substantial element here has a different view.

JEFFERSON
The brier and bramble can never become vine and olive; but their asperities and rudenesses may be softened by culture and their properties improved to usefulness.

WESTMORELAND
I move that this bill be tabled for future consideration while we go to our electors for a mandate from them.

SPEAKER
Seconded?

NELSON
(off) Second.

MUSIC

SPEAKER
A motion to table the bill is made and seconded. All those in favor?

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
I walked out of the Assembly hall; George Wythe, my old law teacher, measured his step beside my own. We walked slowly down the road toward a tavern and some inspiriting tea

WYTHE
I sought an immediate vote, Mr. Jefferson. You readily understand why.

JEFFERSON
I knew. The opponents of my bill will return to the attack now, refreshed by the opinions of their constituents, armed with fresh argument, where I have scarcely any but my faith.

WYTHE
You're not beaten yet, Mr. Jefferson. And even if you should be this time, time will fight for you.

JEFFERSON
I find myself answering logic and flinty realities of human nature and behavior with undocumented subleties of conviction, of personal instinct. What can I do, Mr. Wythe? One cannot argue this question; one knows it in his soul. An orator can clothe sentiment and emotion with glittering armor. Not I. I am no orator. I cannot move the blood in men with words.

WYTHE
You did serviceably enough with your Declaration of Independence.

JEFFERSON
On paper! Then at least I had the merit of fact and the testimony of history in support of what I argued. Now? Theories, hypotheses, instinct, conviction. I cannot prove my proposals economically sound and the next and final attack will emphasize economy.

WYTHE
Yet we know the proposal is sound. We know it!

JEFFERSON
I cannot point to any instance in history where everybody has been educated. I can only argue in that thin element between heaven and earth that a republic cannot survive and that freedom cannot root in ignorance. Examples, they cry—and justly I suppose. Historic evidence, they demand. Facts—not prophecy.

WYTHE
If I knew some way to help you.

JEFFERSON
If you cannot help me now, you can hereafter. Preach, my dear sir, a crusade against ignorance. Establish and improve the law for educating the common people. Let our countrymen know that the people alone can protect us against oppression and that the tax which will be paid for this purpose is not more than the thousandth part of what will be paid to kings, princes or nobles who will rise up among us if we leave the people in ignorance.

WYTHE
(a rueful smile) But again, these are speculations.

JEFFERSON
So was independence. A speculation, a dream, a chimera—yet see us now. If only we could win: what a plan to give stability and solid glory to the republic!

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
My bill came up later. My weapons were no more formidable than before, their armor was heavier and impenetrable. I listened to a recapitulation of the arguments of the opposition; that the masses of people are stupid; that intellect was the property of the well-born, that is to say, the wealthy; that the poor are indolent, hence their poverty—and will not be interested in education; that my scheme would be too costly.

WESTMORELAND
(off) Furthermore if there is real genius among the poor as Mr. Jefferson holds, it will be such as to prevail over poverty; such will seek and achieve the education they merit, by their own effort and native genius.

JEFFERSON
(tired) And leave the discovery of such merit to chance or to its own struggles? I say seek out this worth, this genius from every condition of life, rich as well as poor; prepare them by education for defeating the competition of mere wealth and birth for public trusts.

WESTMORELAND
(off) Is there not genius enough for those trusts in such men as yourself, Mr. Jefferson?

JEFFERSON
No, sir. It must be sought wherever it is, like rare metal. Fools may wear silk and wise men rags. And quite the other way about.

WESTMORELAND
Have you given thought to the monstrous cost of such an adventure in general education?

JEFFERSON
I have given more and fearful thought to the cost of *no* such enterprise. The most effectual means of preventing the perversion of power into tyranny is to illuminate the minds of all the people.

WESTMORELAND
You ask the wealthy to assume the stupendous burden of educating the poor.

JEFFERSON
The wealthy will be as much the beneficiaries of the general enlightenment as the poor.

WESTMORELAND
We have done well enough with our available genius and I say this with special affection and regard for yourself, Mr. Jefferson.

JEFFERSON
(unflattered) I thank you, sir. But the Gothic idea that we are to look backward instead of forward for the improvement of the human mind and to refer to our ancestors for perfection in government and learning is not an idea which this country will endure. By endure, I mean survive.

NELSON
(off) Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER
The member from Nelson County.

NELSON
(off) Mr. Jefferson, while there is merit in our opposition there is merit in, at least, some of the *theory* of education you present. I should not be hostile to a modified bill providing, let us say, only for free elementary schools. I would propose further that in the modified bill we provide for the court of each county to execute the act.

VOICES
(ad lib) Yes—fair enough—splendid!

JEFFERSON
The local magistrates are mostly rich men; they will be unwilling to incur the cost of educating the poor. This is not executing the law,

gentlemen, but executing sentence on the law—and the sentence would seem in this case to be death.

MUSIC

JEFFERSON
My Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge did not then pass, and never during my long lifetime did my own state accept my full plan. A system of general instruction, which should reach every description of our citizens from the richest to the poorest, was the latest of all the public concerns in which I took interest, as it had been the earliest. I was not tenacious of the form in which it should be introduced. I was content in my own time to take a part when I could not get the whole. The University which they gave me as the crown of the incomplete educational edifice was my joy and my pride. I could not fail to add it to my epitaph. My unpassed bill I believed was a prophecy—a prophecy which my own state and all the other states in the American union would fulfill some day in their own ways. This was my prayer: Give us a universal system of public education and receive for this inestimable boon the thanks of the young and the blessings of the old through all generations.

MUSIC

XIII

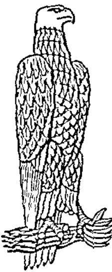
NATURE'S MOST PRECIOUS GIFT

by GEORGE PROBST

Characters:

JEFFERSON

JOHN ADAMS



MUSIC

NARRATOR
In your mind's eye these letters of Jefferson and Adams have this moment been brought to town by a splashed and wayworn post rider. They are magic scrolls. The roll of the drum and the fanfare of the trumpet can be heard in some of them; in others, an echo of the words that resounded in the old halls of the Continental Congress as the Declaration of Independence was made; and in all of them, we hear the words of illustrious men, speaking in friendly communion.

JEFFERSON
My esteemed old friend and more recently my rival, John Adams, thought we ought not to die before we had explained ourselves to each other. So, on New Year's Day, 1812, brushing aside past differences and breaking the silence of a dozen years, he wrote to me the first of more than one hundred letters that brightened and made joyous the evening of my life. No one relished frank discussion more than he, and he soon began to ask provocative though friendly questions.

ADAMS
Thomas Jefferson, Esquire, late President of the United States. Dear Sir: While all other sciences have advanced, that of government is still at a stand: little better understood, little better practised now, than three or four thousand years ago. What is the reason?

JEFFERSON
We have progressed, here in America, from the dull monotony of a colonial subservience. I have thought that differences of opinion must always exist, and that parties in America opposing one another provide a mutual check, and report public affairs to the citizen. We have gone on in our independence, and so happily we shall go on, differing and prospering beyond example in the history of man.

I remember working with you in behalf of the Declaration of Independence. It was your confidence and fervid speeches that encouraged and supported us through the difficulties surrounding us, which, like the ceaseless action of gravity, weighed on us by night and by day. When the question came before Congress whether my draft of the Declaration of Independence was to be proclaimed to the world, you defended it so ably that I called you the Colossus of Independence!

ADAMS
I never could bring myself seriously to consider that I was a great man, or of much importance or consideration in the world. The aim of my life has been to understand government—to compare the effect of different forms of it upon public and private happiness. I wrote from Paris to my good wife, Abigail, before you joined us there. I said that I must study politics and war that my sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy. My sons ought to study mathematics and philosophy, natural history, commerce and agriculture, in order to give their children a right to study painting, poetry, music, architecture, statuary, tapestry, and porcelain.

JEFFERSON
We have both devoted our lives to public duties,

though I would have preferred to cultivate the adornments of a private life. But in our studies and experience with government, the different conclusions we have drawn from our political reading and reflections were not permitted to lessen personal esteem, each of us being conscious that they were the result of an honest conviction in the other.

MUSIC

ADAMS
I recollect, near thirty years ago, to have said carelessly to you that I wished I could find time and means to write something upon aristocracy. You seized upon the idea and encouraged me to do it with all that friendly warmth that is natural and habitual to you. I soon began, and have been writing upon that subject ever since. I have been so unfortunate as never to be able to make myself understood!

JEFFERSON
I remember that I myself misunderstood you. I recall your supposed espousal of the cause of titles in America, in the first meeting of Congress, when you wanted the chief executive to be called "His Highness, the President of the United States and Protector of Their Liberties." The opposition to monarchy was not universal in America then, my old friend, and your words and actions did seem to repudiate principles of republicanism which you had supported so valiantly in earlier years. You said some things that sounded like a defense of old-world aristocracy. I remember your writing that the experience of history had led mankind to the unanimous conviction that hereditary succession is attended with fewer evils than frequent elections.

ADAMS
I remember that only too well! The fury of the attacks upon me so frightened my printer that I became convinced that to proceed would do more hurt than good. I never had any desire to introduce a hereditary president or Senate into America. And at the time, I wrote to you saying so, and challenged all mankind to find such a passage in my public or private writings! After all, I joined in rebelling against the British King and aristocracy. But here in America —*in any society—there is the general problem* of aristocracy and liberty. Can they exist together?

I mean by the problem of aristocracy that *birth* and *wealth* together have prevailed over virtue and talents in all ages. This makes the aristocrats the most difficult animals to manage of anything in the whole theory and practice of government. They will not suffer themselves to be governed. They not only exert all their industry and courage, but they employ the vote of the many to knock to pieces every plan and model of government that the most honest architects in legislation can invent to keep them within bounds. There you have it. The many will acknowledge no other aristocracy but that of birth and wealth. Your experience with this truth will not much differ from that of your old friend—John Adams.

JEFFERSON
It is true that men by their natures are divided into two parties. Call them Whigs and Tories, left side and right side, Democrats and Aristocrats, they are the same parties still. The same political parties which now agitate the United States have existed through all time. In my own opinion the weakly, the nerveless, the rich and corrupt fear the people and are Tories by nature; while men who are healthy, strong, and bold cherish the people and are Whigs by nature.

ADAMS
It is a fine observation of yours that Whig and Tory belong to the nature of man! Excellent! I also think that the inequalities of mind and body are so established by God Almighty in His constitution of human nature that no art or policy can ever plane them down to a

level. But who are these aristocrats? I say the five pillars of aristocracy are beauty, wealth, birth, genius, and virtue. Any one of the three first can at any time overbear any one or both of the last two.

Consider the effective beauties of history. What gave Pompadour and Du Barry the power of making Cardinals and Popes? Their beauty. A daughter of a greengrocer walks the streets in London daily, with a basket of cabbage, dandelions, and spinach on her head. She is observed by the painters to have an elegant figure, a graceful step. She is painted by forty artists—marries Sir William Hamilton. This lady not only causes the triumphs of the Nile and Trafalgar, but separates Naples from France, and finally banishes the King and Queen from Sicily. Such is the aristocracy of this natural talent and beauty.

I believe that aristocracy is the ordinance of God Almighty wrought into the fabric of the universe. Philosophers and politicians may nibble and quibble, but they never will get rid of it. The *only* resource is to control it.

Wealth is another monster to be subdued. The other day I read a Greek poem which said: "Nobility in men is worth as much as it is in horses, asses or rams. But the meanest blooded puppy in the world, if he gets a little money, is as good a man as the best of them." We may call this sentiment a prejudice; but in my opinion, no one can pretend to establish a free government without attention to it.

JEFFERSON

True, my old friend—many of my observations of aristocracies of birth and wealth pointed in the same direction as yours—but that was chiefly with respect to Europe. [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] and steeped in the vices which that situation generates. In Europe, indeed, the dignity of man was lost in arbitrary distinctions; there the human species was crushed under the weight of the few.

But here in America now, everyone may have land to labor for himself if he chooses; and can earn a comfortable subsistence to provide for a cessation from labor in old age. Everyone, by his property, or by his satisfactory situation, is interested in the support of law and order. It suffices for us that ours is the New World and good men never destroyed any state. *Our* people have no more idea of *hereditary* aristocracy than they have of the mode of existence on the moon or planets; and, far more than elsewhere, they are free to make their way.

ADAMS

Jefferson, if you deny my conclusions I will prove them to you by examples drawn from your own Virginia, and from every other state in the Union, and from the history of every nation, civilized and savage!

JEFFERSON

After the Declaration of Independence, at the first session of our state legislature, we passed laws in Virginia abolishing such aristocratic privileges as primogeniture and entail, freeing the land for living generations by furthering equal inheritance. These laws, drawn by myself, laid the axe to the foot of our pseudo-aristocracy. I observe also now that the members of the most prominent Virginia families must have great personal superiority over a common competitor to be elected by the people and many of the wealthy are unpopular. What of all this, Mr. Adams?

ADAMS

Has science, or morals, or philosophy, or criticism, or Christianity, advanced or enlightened mankind upon this subject and shown them that the idea of the "well-born" is a prejudice, a phantom, a Cape-fly-away, a dream? No, no, my friend; you underestimate the difficulty!

I say it is in the constitution of human nature to accept the idea of the "well-born." We will never get rid of it; all we can do is try to control it.

To control aristocracies, we must recognize aristocrats. Who are they? Philosophers may answer, "The wise and the good." But the world and mankind have always answered, "The rich, the beautiful, and the well-born." And philosophers themselves, in marrying their children, prefer the rich, the handsome and the well-descended to the wise and the good. What chance have talents and virtues then, in competition with wealth and birth and beauty? Is this great fact in the natural history of man to be waved out of sight? Answer your friend and merciless inquisitor, John Adams.

JEFFERSON

No, my learned and honest friend. I do not ignore the persistent tendencies which you have observed in human beings. I do not believe with the skeptics, the Rochefoucaulds, the Montaignes, that fourteen out of fifteen men are rogues. I have noted a much higher proportion of general honesty. I *have* always found that rogues conspire to be uppermost, but weaknesses of human nature need not be translated into unalterable principles of morals and philosophy.

ADAMS

I believe that the distinction between aristocrat and democrat, however odious, will never be done away with as long as some men are taller and others shorter, some wiser and others sillier, some virtuous, some vicious, some rich, some poor. The distinction was made by nature for the order of society, both parties, like the sexes, being mutually beneficial to each other.

JEFFERSON

I agree with you that there is a natural aristocracy among men. The grounds of this are virtue and talents. Formerly, bodily powers gave distinction to certain men. But since the invention of gun powder has armed the weak as well as the strong with missile death, bodily strength, like beauty, good humor, politeness and other accomplishments, has become but an auxiliary ground of distinction. There is also an artificial aristocracy, founded on wealth and birth, and generally without either virtue or talents.

The natural aristocracy I consider as the most precious gift of nature, for the instruction, the trusts and government of society. And indeed, it would have been inconsistent in Creation to have formed man for the social state, and not to have provided virtue and wisdom enough to manage the concerns of the society. May we not even say that that form of government is best which provides the most effectually for a pure selection of these *natural* aristocrats into the offices of government? The *artificial* aristocracy is a mischievous ingredient in government and provision should be made to prevent its ascendancy. On the question of what is the best provision, you and I differ, but we differ as rational friends using the free exercise of our own reason and mutually indulging its errors.

What think you on all of this? Ever and affectionately yours, Thomas Jefferson.

ADAMS

We are now explicitly agreed on one important point—that there "is a natural aristocracy among men, the grounds of which are virtue and talents." You very justly indulge a little merriment upon this solemn subject of aristocracy. I often laugh at it too, for there is nothing in this laughable world more ridiculous than the management of it by almost all the nations of the earth; but while we smile, mankind have reason to say to us, as the frogs said to the boys, what is sport to you are wounds and death to us.

When I consider the weakness, the folly, the pride, the vanity, the avarice, the unbounded ambition, the unfeeling cruelty of a

majority of those in all nations who are allowed aristocratic power, and, on the other hand, the stupidity with which the multitude not only become their dupes, but even love to be taken in by their tricks, I feel a stronger disposition to weep at their destiny than to laugh at their folly.

JEFFERSON

I will not believe that our labors are lost. I shall not die without hope that light and liberty are on steady advance. And even should the cloud of barbarism and despotism again obscure the science and liberties of Europe, this country remains to preserve and restore light and liberty to them. The flames kindled on the Fourth of July, 1776, have spread over too much of the globe to be extinguished by the feeble engines of despotism.

ADAMS

Your distinction between natural talents and artificial aristocracy does not appear to me to be well founded. Education, wealth, strength, beauty, stature, birth, marriage, graceful attitudes and motions, gait, air, complexion, physiognomy, are talents as well as genius, science, and learning. Any one of these talents that in fact commands or influences two votes in society gives to the man who possesses it the character of an aristocrat, in my sense of the word.

Pick up the first hundred men you meet and make a republic. Every man will have an equal vote; but when deliberations and discussions are opened, it will be found that twenty-five, by their talents—virtues being equal—will be able to carry fifty votes. Every one of these twenty-five is an aristocrat in my sense of the word; whether he obtains his one vote in addition to his own, by his birth, fortune, figure, eloquence, science, learning, craft, cunning, or even his character for good fellowship, and a *bon vivant*. Birth and wealth are *conferred* on some men as imperiously by nature as genius, strength, or beauty.

JEFFERSON

You think it best to put the pseudo-aristocrats into a separate chamber of the legislature where they may be hindered from doing mischief by the checks and balances of our government—and where also they may be a protection to wealth against the plundering enterprises of the majority of the people. I think that to give them power in order to prevent them from doing mischief is arming them for it and increasing instead of remedying the evil. Nor do I believe this necessary to protect the wealthy; because enough of these wealthy will find their way into the legislature to protect themselves.

ADAMS

Your distinction, again, between aristocrats and pseudo-aristocrats does not help the matter. I would trust the one as soon as the other with unlimited power—that is to say, I would trust neither of them with it. You suppose a difference of opinion between us on the *subject* [illegible] distinctions from the [illegible] elections to offices of great power and profit but by *making them hereditary*.

Aristocracy, like waterfowl, dives for ages and then rises with brighter plumage. It is a subtle venom that diffuses itself unseen, over oceans and continents, and triumphs over time. If I could prevent its deleterious influence, I would put it all into the "black hole of Calcutta." But as this is [illegible] that rise [illegible] better w[illegible] and place [illegible] *sentinel* on each side of it.

JEFFERSON

I think that the best remedy for aristocracy is that provided by all our American constitu-

I say it is in the constitution of human nature to accept the idea of the "well-born." We will never get rid of it; all we can do is try to control it.

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To control aristocracies, we must recognize aristocrats. Who are they? Philosophers may answer, "The wise and the good." But the world and mankind have always answered, "The rich, the beautiful, and the well-born." And philosophers themselves, in marrying their children, prefer the rich, the handsome and the well-descended to the wise and the good. What chance have talents and virtues then, in competition with wealth and birth and beauty? Is this great fact in the natural history of man to be waved out of sight? Answer your friend and merciless inquisitor, John Adams.

JEFFERSON

No, my learned and honest friend. I do not ignore the persistent tendencies which you have observed in human beings. I do not believe with the skeptics, the Rochefoucaulds, the Montaignes, that fourteen out of fifteen men are rogues. I have noted a much higher proportion of general honesty. I *have* always found that rogues conspire to be uppermost, but weaknesses of human nature need not be translated into unalterable principles of morals and philosophy.

ADAMS

I believe that the distinction between aristocrat and democrat, however odious, will never be done away with as long as some men are taller and others shorter, some wiser and others sillier, some virtuous, some vicious, some rich, some poor. The distinction was made by nature for the order of society, both parties, like the sexes, being mutually beneficial to each other.

JEFFERSON

I agree with you that there is a natural aristocracy among men. The grounds of this are virtue and talents. Formerly, bodily powers gave distinction to certain men. But since the invention of gun powder has armed the weak as well as the strong with missile death, bodily strength, like beauty, good humor, politeness and other accomplishments, has become but an auxiliary ground of distinction. There is also an artificial aristocracy, founded on wealth and birth, and generally without either virtue or talents.

The natural aristocracy I consider as the most precious gift of nature, for the instruction, the trusts and government of society. And indeed, it would have been inconsistent in Creation to have formed man for the social state, and not to have provided virtue and wisdom enough to manage the concerns of the society. May we not even say that that form of government is best which provides the most effectually for a pure selection of these *natural* aristocrats into the offices of government? The *artificial* aristocracy is a mischievous ingredient in government and provision should be made to prevent its ascendancy. On the question of what is the best provision, you and I differ, but we differ as rational friends using the free exercise of our own reason and mutually indulging its errors.

What think you on all of this? Ever and affectionately yours, Thomas Jefferson.

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An important part of my own hope, as you will recall, is to promote a more general diffusion of learning, thus enabling the people to be better censors of their own government. Worth and genius should be sought from every condition of life and completely prepared by education for defeating the competition of wealth and birth for positions of public responsibility.

I have thus stated my opinion on a point on which we differ, not with a view to controversy, for we are both too old to change opinions which are the result of a long life of inquiry and reflection, but on the suggestions of a former letter of yours, that we ought not to die before we have explained ourselves to each other. We acted in perfect harmony, through a long and perilous contest, for our liberty and independence. A constitution has been acquired. Neither of us thinks it perfect. Yet we both consider it competent to render our fellow citizens the happiest and the securest on whom the sun has ever shone. If we do not think exactly alike as to imperfections, it matters little to our country which, after devoting to it long lives of disinterested labor, we have delivered over to our successors in life, who will be able to take care of it and of themselves.

I do not write with my former ease. Crippled wrists and fingers make writing slow and laborious. But while writing to you I lose all sense of these things in the recollection of ancient times. God bless you, and give you health, strength, good spirits, and as much of life as you think worth having.

ADAMS

The fundamental article of my creed is that despotism, or unlimited sovereignty, or absolute power, is the same in a majority of a popular assembly, an aristocratic council, an oligarchical junta, and a single emperor. Equally arbitrary, cruel, bloody, and in every respect diabolical. A legislative, an executive, and a judicial power comprehend the whole of what is meant and understood by government. It is by balancing each of these powers against the other two, that the efforts in human nature toward tyranny can alone be checked and restrained, and any degree of freedom preserved.

MUSIC

ADAMS

(pause) My dear friend. I anxiously hope that you are well. Now, sir, for my griefs! The dear partner of my life for fifty-four years as a wife now lies in extreme illness, forbidden to speak or be spoken to. If human life is a bubble, no matter how soon it breaks. If human life is, as I firmly believe, an immortal existence, we ought patiently to wait the instructions of the great teacher. I am, sir, your deeply afflicted friend. John Adams.

JEFFERSON

The public papers, my dear friend, announce the fatal event of which your letter of Oct. 20 had given me ominous foreboding. Tried myself in the school of affliction, by the loss of every form of connection which can rive the human heart, I know well, and feel what you have lost, what you have suffered, are suffering, and have yet to endure. The same trials have taught me that, for ills so immeasurable, time and silence are the only medicines. I will not therefore, by useless condolences, open afresh the sluices of your grief nor, although mingling sincerely my tears with yours, will I say a word more, where words are vain, but that it is of some comfort to us both that the term is not very distant at which we are to deposit, in the

same cerement, our sorrows and suffering bodies, and to ascend in essence to an ecstatic meeting with the friends we have loved and lost and whom we shall still love and never lose again.

God bless you and support you under your heavy affliction. Thomas Jefferson.

ADAMS

My esteemed friend, I am going to ask you— Would you go back to your cradle, and live over again your seventy years?

JEFFERSON

You ask if I would agree to live my seventy— or rather my seventy-three years—over again? To which I say Yea. I think with you that it is a good world on the whole; that it has been framed on a principle of benevolence, and more pleasure than pain dealt out to us. There are, indeed, those who might say Nay—gloomy and hypochondriac minds, inhabitants of diseased bodies, disgusted with the present, and despairing of the future—always counting that the worst will happen, because it may happen. To these I say, "How much pain have cost us the evils which have never happened!" My temperament is sanguine. I steer my bark with Hope in the head, leaving Fear astern. My hopes, indeed, sometimes fail; but not oftener than the forebodings of the gloomy. Affectionately, adieu. Thomas Jefferson.

ADAMS

I admire your navigation, and should like to sail with you, either in your ship or in my own, alongside of yours. Hope, with her gay ensigns displayed at the prow; fear, with her hobgoblins behind the stern. Hope remains. What pleasure! Ninety-nine hundredths of the pleasures and pains of life are nothing but hopes and fears. All nations known to history or in travels have hoped, believed, and expected a future and a better state.

While I breathe I shall be your friend. Your ancient friend, John Adams.

We did not write each other again. For in my ninety-first year, on the Fourth of July, 1826—the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence—death came for us both. Jefferson lived till noon of that glorious day—like a lamp that after lighting the way through a long dark night, shines on to make more bright the dawn and the new day of *sunlight* over all mankind. As I too set sail that day, alongside of him, with my last *breath*, I *said*, "Thomas Jefferson still *survives*!"

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